

**Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey  
Reconnaissance Survey Final Report  
of  
Arthur County, Nebraska  
prepared for  
Nebraska State Historical Society  
State Historic Preservation Office**

**by**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey**

The Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey (NEHBS) is an ongoing project of the State Historic Preservation Office. Since its beginnings in 1974 with limited fieldwork by staff and student interns, NEHBS has expanded from a few thousand sites in urban and rural areas to over 40,000 recorded properties in three-fourths of the state. By 1992, the office plans to cover the entire state.

Through its documentation of the state's historic and architectural resources, NEHBS provides a basis for historic preservation in Nebraska. Survey data is used to list buildings in the National Register, which in turn may result in recognition and preservation. NEHBS data is also used to determine needs for further documentation and planning for the state's historic places. A brief description of Historic Preservation Office programs follows.

Equally important, while contributing to the history of the entire state, the survey also promotes local and regional awareness of significant buildings and sites. County officials, historical societies, planning organizations, and individuals are encouraged to use the information for community development, tourism, and historic preservation in their own communities.

### **National Register**

The Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey, which documents historic buildings and places throughout the state, also identifies those that may qualify for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Established in 1966, the National Register is America's official inventory of sites, buildings, and districts, recognized for their importance to national, state, and local history. To qualify for listing, properties must be at least

fifty (50) years old and have associations with one or more of the following: historic events, significant individuals, architecture, or future research potential.

### **Tax Incentive Program**

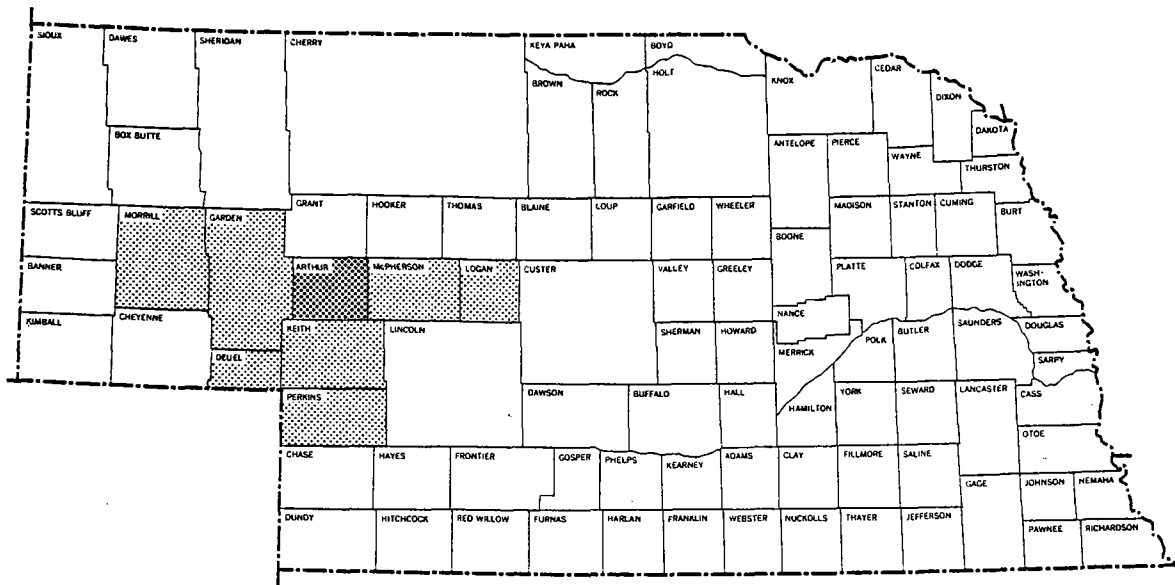
Inclusion in the National Register may enable income-producing properties to qualify for federal tax credits as certified rehabilitation projects. Designed to encourage the reuse and revitalization of historic buildings, neighborhoods, and "main street" districts, the tax incentives have been available since 1976. The program seeks to promote the reuse of historic buildings, including community redevelopment efforts and economic opportunities by retaining the distinctive qualities of buildings or districts.

### **Review and Compliance**

The Historic Buildings Survey is an important source of information for the State Historic Preservation Office and government agencies when complying with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Commonly referred to as "review and compliance," Section 106 was established to ensure the documentation and protection of buildings and sites which may be affected by any federally funded or licensed project, such as highway construction. NEHBS survey data enables preservation staff and federal agencies to evaluate potentially affected properties and upon evaluation, to seek methods to mitigate the effect of these projects on important resources.

These and other programs are administered in Nebraska by the State Historic Preservation Office. Additional information may be obtained by contacting the office.

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### Western Nebraska Sandhills and High Plains Survey Area

The architectural research firm of Save America's Heritage was selected by the Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office (NESHPO) and engaged in a contractual agreement to conduct the Western Nebraska Sandhills and High Plains Historic Buildings Survey. The survey consisted of the completed preliminary fieldwork in eight western Nebraska counties: Morrill, Deuel, Perkins, Keith, Garden, Arthur, McPherson, and Logan. Initiated in September, 1989, the survey was completed in the summer of 1990. With the completion of the eight-county project, the Western Nebraska Sandhills and High Plains were the third region of the state to be completed under the NESHPO's plan for preliminary statewide coverage by 1991-92.

The primary objective of the survey was to provide a preliminary characterization of the historic material resources extant in the western Nebraska region. Another primary objective of the survey was the identification of a definitive group of historic properties judged eligible or potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

The Historic Buildings Survey of Arthur County has accomplished this goal by identifying a total of 14 historic properties considered eligible or potentially eligible for the NRHP.

In addition to the completion of these primary goals, several of the survey's secondary goals were also satisfied. These include the identification of specific building types or construction methods which were common or unique to the historic built environment of Nebraska, and the expansion of knowledge regarding ethnic settlement and building technologies.

The following table outlines the numerical results of the Arthur County Historic Buildings Survey. The results included in parentheses indicate those properties previously surveyed by the NESHPO. The numbers are summarized according to the NEHBS number prefixes for rural and town locations.

Numerical Summary of Arthur County Reconnaissance Survey

ARTHUR COUNTY	TOTAL PROPERTIES	CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS	CONTRIBUTING SITES	CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURES	CONTRIBUTING OBJECTS
AT00: Rural	17 (2)	69 (2)	0	0	25
AT01: Arthur	12 (11)	18 (10)	0	0	0
TOTAL NUMBER SURVEYED					
IN FY 1989-1990:	29 (13)	87 (12)	0	0	25
TOTAL NEHBS TO DATE:	42	99	0	0	25

Approximated Area of Survey Coverage: 149 square miles (95,120 acres).

Numbers in parenthesis indicate previously surveyed properties



## **HISTORIC OVERVIEW OF ARTHUR COUNTY**

### **Physical Description**

Arthur County is located in western Nebraska east of the panhandle. Bordered by Keith, Garden, Grant, and McPherson Counties, Arthur County is included in the west-central Sandhills.

Arthur County is vast and relatively unpopulated; there are no rivers or streams within the county and the elevation remains steady. Furthermore, Arthur County has few of lakes which distinguish the topography of its surrounding sandhills counties. These factors were significant influences on the settlement and subsequent development of Arthur County.

The Sand Hills region of the state is composed of hilly land of low to high sand dunes stabilized by grass cover. These dunes mantle stream-deposited, sand, gravel and sandstone. The sandhills prairie and topography are unique to Nebraska and North America. The region is drained by the Loup River system except along the northern edge which is drained by the Niobrara River, (Historic Contexts in Nebraska, NESHPO, 1989).

### **Original Inhabitants**

Prior to nineteenth-century white settlement, the Pawnee and Sioux Native American tribes claimed the land of the Sand Hills as hunting grounds. The two tribes disputed various tracts between themselves. The Pawnee claimed the drainage area of the Loup River as their hunting grounds and camped near the mouth of the river. The Sioux claimed lands east to the fork of the Platte River and north to the mouth of the White River in South Dakota as their hunting grounds. Both tribes depended on the bison, which roamed the sandhills in vast numbers as their primary source of food and raw material.

Other Native American tribes in Nebraska included the Omaha, Otoe, and Ponca, all of whom were more sedentary than the Sioux or Pawnee. Between 1854 and 1876 all territories

in Nebraska claimed by Native American tribes had been acquired by the United States government either through treaty and/or coercion. The final treaty, in 1876, opened the Sand Hills region to settlement.

### **Settlement of Nebraska**

The first Europeans to reach what would become Nebraska were Spanish soldiers in search of mythical Quivira (Olson, 1966, p. 29). By the early 1700's the French had begun to move into the trans-Missouri country. In 1763 the Spanish, through the Treaty of Paris, assumed possession of all land west of the Mississippi River. In 1800, the French took possession of the region under the Treaty of San Ildefonso. However, in 1803 the French, under Napoleon, sold this vast expanse of land to the Americans for about 4 cents an acre, or fifteen million dollars. The Louisiana Purchase, as the exchange was called, included the territory that would become Nebraska.

In 1803, the federal government began plans to initiate exploration of their new possession with the famed Lewis and Clark Expedition. Undertaken "for purposes of extending the external commerce of the United States," Congress appropriated \$2,500.00 for the expedition (Olson, p. 36). In the spring of 1804, members of the exploration team left the St. Louis area and by July 1804, had made their first camp near the mouth of the Little Nemaha River in what would eventually become Nebraska.

The vast area of land obtained through the Louisiana Purchase was designated by Congress in 1834 as land reserved for Native Americans. During the first half of the nineteenth-century, this region was traversed by fur trappers, missionaries, and westward

bound settlers. Examples of Pre-Territorial (1804-1854)<sup>1</sup> establishments in Nebraska include Fort Atkinson (1820's) on the Missouri River, and the Moses Merrill Baptist Mission (1833) near Bellvue.

Another important aspect of settlement in Nebraska during the Pre-Territorial Period (1804-1854), was the presence of the Oregon, Mormon, and California Trails; all of which passed through the southern half of the state. These trails passed westward through the Platte River valley and were primarily used between 1841 and 1848. These trails brought many people and opportunities for trade to the region.

Nebraska Territory was officially established in 1854, and the first legislature convened in January, 1855. During the Territorial Period (1854-1867), the majority of settlement took place in the southeast and eastern sections of the state. In this period, settlement occurred through either the provisions of the Pre-Emption Law of 1841, purchase of military bounty land warrants, or by direct purchase. The Homestead Act of 1862 allowed for more liberal disbursement of public domain, and allowed settlers to acquire between 40 and 160 acres of land without the standard per acre fee if they remained on the claim for five years and met a specified level of improvements (i.e. buildings, land under cultivation). A significant amount of settlement in of Nebraska occurred primarily under the impetus of the Homestead Act, or later under the provisions of the 1904 Kinkaid Act (for a detailed discussion of the Kinkaid Act, see p. 51).

Nebraska became a state in 1867 with its present borders defined. In the early 1860's, the federal government began planning a trans-continental railway line for the

<sup>1</sup> All Temporal Periods referred to in this text are taken from "Historic Contexts in Nebraska, Topical Listing", NESHPO, 1989, and consist of:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1) Pre-Territorial, 1804-1854          | 5) Spurious Economic Growth, 1920-1929 |
| 2) Territorial Period, 1854-1867       | 6) The Great Depression, 1929-1941     |
| 3) Settlement and Expansion, 1867-1890 | 7) World War II, 1941-1945             |
| 4) Development and Growth, 1890-1920   | 8) Post-War Nebraska, 1946-Present     |

transportation of people and goods which would unite the country. The railroad would extend through Nebraska beginning at a point near Omaha. In 1867, the route was completed when the Union Pacific and Central Pacific lines joined in Utah. Development of the line through Nebraska had a major impact on the settlement and growth of small towns and communities throughout the western region of the state, and the state as a whole. Inland counties, without a railroad through their borders, generally developed at a slower rate and often did not achieve the kinds of settlement and sustained populations in counties through which a line ran. In counties where the railroad extended, towns, or proposed towns, prospered or failed depending on the location of a depot or siding.

While eastern, northeastern, and central regions of the state had been settled during the Settlement and Expansion Period (1867-1890), the Sand Hills region of Nebraska was only just beginning to be settled. This region, encompassing a great portion of western Nebraska north of the Platte River, was generally not suitable for the agricultural activities pursued in the rest of the state. Since the 1870's, cattlemen had free-ranged vast herds in the area. In the late 1860's and early 1870's, Texas cattlemen began to drive their herds north on the Texas Trail to feed in Nebraska. The free-range cattle companies established large ranches in the Sand Hills region and operated until conflicts with the federal government divided the land into smaller homesteads parcels, (for a discussion of the early cattle industry, see Sand Hills Range Livestock Production p. 28).

Although settlement had begun in the Sand Hills region during the Settlement and Expansion era (1867-1890), it was not until the Development and Growth Period in Nebraska (1890-1920) that significant permanent settlement was established. The most significant impetus for extensive settlement of the Sand Hills during this period was the passage of the Kinkaid Act on June 28, 1904. Designed to encourage settlement in the Sand Hills region, the Kinkaid Act allowed homesteaders to file 640 acre claims, as opposed to the

previous 160 acres. This act recognized that the arid Sand Hills region required a larger parcel of land for the application of farming and ranching practices. The Kinkaid Act was responsible for the largest census figures to date (1920) for many of the Sand Hills counties. Although many Kinkaid homesteads eventually sold out to larger ranching endeavors, the act successfully disposed of the public lands in the area.

The social and economic success of the Development and Growth Period (1890-1920) came to an end with the era of the Great Depression (1929-1941). By December 1932, agricultural prices were the lowest in state history; and the farmers' purchasing power continued to decline. Many people left the western section of the state and some towns ceased to exist. Populations declined and much commercial development came to a halt. The end of the Depression, followed by the onset of World War II (1941-1945), combined to stabilize not only the Sand Hills but the state as a whole. Economically, Nebraska benefited from the War through the arrival of new industries. Training facilities, ordnance plants and a bomber production plant were located in the state. As the War drew to a close, a new and lasting prosperity had begun in the state.

Further stability has been witnessed during the Post-War Period in Nebraska, (1946-present). The agricultural prosperity that began during World War II continued on into the 1950's and 1960's. Economic development and increased agricultural technology have vaulted the region into an era of advanced irrigation and range management techniques. So while the number of farms and rural population decreased, agricultural output increased to new highs.

### **County History**

The Territorial Period, 1854-1867 (See Temporal Periods, NESHPO: 1990) in Nebraska brought little to the region which would become Arthur County. The first Americans to

make inroads into the Arthur County area began to arrive during the Settlement and Expansion Period (1867-1890). Generally these were cattlemen who brought their herds to the region in search of free, open range for cattle grazing. By the early 1900's the ranches of Buffalo Bill Cody and the North Brothers were headquartered in McPherson County and extended into Arthur County.

In 1884, the region was opened up to settlement by the federal government, an event that marked the end of the free-range ranch. In 1886-1887, the State Legislature divided the Sand Hills region into its present counties. Arthur County, however, was not organized at that time and fell under the jurisdiction of Logan County to the east. The 1890 Federal Census listed a population of 91 people within the area that would become Arthur and Logan Counties.

During the period of Development and Growth (1890-1920) two major factors influenced the settlement of Arthur County: the passage of the Kinkaid Act in 1904, and the official establishment of Arthur County in 1913. The Kinkaid Act, along with the opening of a forest reserve in 1911, resulted in a population increase. The 1912-1913 session of the State Legislature passed an enabling act that created Arthur County. The first census records following the county's creation listed a population of 1,412 in 1920.

Another aspect of county growth between 1890 and 1920 was the establishment of a post office at Lena in 1894. In 1913, the townsite of Arthur was chosen as the county seat. The first courthouse was in a covered wagon. In 1915, a small, one-room courthouse was constructed at a cost of approximately \$900.00. Now in the National Register of Historic Places, this small frame building (AT01-004) served the county through the early 1960's until it was replaced with a more modern building. The first courthouse now serves as a historical attraction and is used for storage. It was also during this period that the Arthur County High School was established. The first classes were held in a one-room

building which has since been remodeled into a teacherage. It is also important to note that no railroad lines extended into Arthur County, thereby depriving the county of a major source of potential growth and economic development.

Commercially, the Development and Growth period (1890-1920) was one in which many of Arthur County's businesses began. Churches and civic organizations were also established during this period.

During the periods of Spurious Economic Growth (1920-1929) and the Great Depression (1929-1941), Arthur County struggled forward. Additions were made to the county high school and the Arthur County Co-op Credit Association was created in 1939. However, it was not until after World War II that major improvements in transportation and communication occurred. The Post-War period (1945-Present) has been one of stabilization for the county.

In 1951 and 1952, respectively, telephone service and electricity came to Arthur County. These two developments were of great importance both in terms of the quality of life for county residents and as commercial and economic ties with the rest of the state. Perhaps more important, however, was the improvement and construction of highways in and through the county. Transportation in the sandhills had always been difficult and time consuming, subject to the caprice of nature. The two state highways in the county are Highway 61, which runs north/south and connects Arthur with Ogallala and Hyannis, and Highway 92 which runs east/west between Tryon and Arthur. In 1958, a program to oil rural roads was initiated with 30 miles of road being oiled.

#### **Arthur County Towns and Communities**

The county seat of Arthur is the only town in Arthur County. The town site of Arthur was selected as the county seat when the county was officially organized in 1913. The Arthur post office, established in 1914, is the only post office still serving the county.

The first building in Arthur was a general store, constructed in the spring of 1914. Between 1914 and 1920 the town of Arthur experienced its period of initial development. The courthouse (GD01-004), jail (GD01-005), and general store were among the first buildings in the new town. The Arthur Enterprise, the official newspaper of Arthur county, was also begun in 1914. As mentioned previously, the Arthur County High School held its first classes in 1914 and by 1920 a two-room structure had been built to hold classes. In 1916, the Arthur State Bank was established. Churches were also established during the town's early years. The Arthur Baptist church (1914) acquired and relocated into an existing building in 1919.

Between 1920 and 1941 Arthur slowly continued town development. The Arthur State Bank fell victim to the crisis of the Great Depression closed in 1932. It was not until 1939 that the Arthur County Co-op Credit Association was established, with offices in the old courthouse. In 1922, additions were made to the high school, a 28ft by 28ft room and basement to the original building. Four years later, the building was again remodelled and wired for electricity. In 1927 a group of Congregationalists began plans to build a church in Arthur. The church (AT01-001) was constructed of stacked, baled hay. The one room hall-type building is stuccoed on the outside and plastered on the inside. Named the Arthur Pilgrim Holiness Church, the unique building is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Other developments in the community at this time, include the establishment of civic organizations such as the American Legion Post #207, the American Legion Auxilliary, and the Arthur County Library which was located in the Community Hall.

Although Arthur has never been a large town, as evidenced by its 1980 population of approximately 125 residents, growth continued after World War II. In 1949, construction of a new high school began and was completed in 1950. In 1967, additions consisting of a gym, two classrooms, library, furnace room, concession room, and office space occurred.



The Arthur Baptist Church, which burned, was rebuilt in 1944. The parsonage was remodelled in 1949. A new courthouse was built in 1960-61 with room for the town library. The community hall, which had originally housed the library, was moved out of town. Today, Arthur remains a small county seat with its population also remaining low. There are various businesses in Arthur today including a cafe, general merchandise store, newspaper, supply and gas shop, tavern, feed store, veterinary clinic, and the Bank of Keystone.

### **Ethnic Trends and Population**

The first census reports available for Arthur County are from 1890 when it was part of Logan County. At that time 91 residents were listed for the area. The foreign born population consisted of twenty-two (22) residents almost entirely of German origin. For the census years 1900 and 1910 Arthur County's population was still included with the Logan County region. The total population of the two counties in 1900 and 1910, respectively, was 960 and 1,521. In 1900, the foreign-born were again predominantly German (19) followed by Polish (12), British (12), and smaller numbers of Irish, French, Scandinavian, Swiss, and Austrian. In 1920 Arthur County was listed independently on the census with a population of 1,412. In 1920, 73 persons were of foreign birth. The majority of those listed came from Germany (24), Denmark (15), and Czechoslovakia (11) along with Canada (5), Ireland (4), the United Kingdom (4), Austria (3), Norway (2), Sweden (1),

Russia (1), and others. Between 1930 and 1950 Arthur County's population decreased from 1,344 to 803 persons. In 1930 forty-four (44) persons were of foreign birth. Germans and Danish comprised the largest number of foreign born with Czechoslovakians, British, and Swedish also represented. Population in Arthur County continued to decline with 680 persons in 1960, 606 persons in 1970, and 513 persons in 1980.

### **Agriculture and Ranching**

Arthur County is classified in the Sand Hills Range Livestock Production region of the state (NESHPO, "Historic Contexts in Nebraska: Topical Listing" 1990). Cattle production and related agricultural practices are the major economic enterprises in the county. (For a more detailed discussion of Sand Hills Range Livestock Production refer to page xx).

Irrigation was attempted as early as 1900 with sporadic attempts at further development throughout the first half of the century. In the 1960's and 1970's center pivot irrigation was practiced in the county. Many ranchers depend on their crops grown on irrigated land to feed their herds through the winter. In spite of the development of irrigation, ranching remains the major endeavor of Arthur County. In 1962, the average ranch size in the county was 3,200 acres.

### **Final Comment**

Arthur County is one of the least populated and most rural counties in Nebraska. It is noted for the construction of baled hay buildings as best exhibited by the Pilgrim Holiness Church (AT01-001), the Joseph Monhart House (AT01-003), and the Casey Smith House (AT00-016). Ranching is the single most important economic activity in the county with some agricultural practice occurring with the aid of center-pivot irrigation.

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## GENERAL SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESULTS

### Introduction

The primary objective of the Arthur County Historic Buildings Survey was to provide a preliminary characterization of the historic resources extant within the county. In addition to this, several other objectives were identified in the Research Design which utilize the data collected by the survey and validate the need for its performance. First among these additional objectives was the contribution of information to the contextual setting of Nebraska's historic architecture. The performance of the Arthur County Historic Buildings Survey has generated information which contributes to a statewide knowledge and builds a background with which future survey information can be evaluated.

Secondly, it was the objective of the Arthur County Historic Buildings Survey to identify those properties within the county which are eligible or potentially eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Additional objectives of the survey included: the identification of specific properties or geographic areas which, in the event of an intensive survey, would contribute useful information to the context of Nebraska's historic architecture; the identification of specific property types; the identification of construction methods which may relate to or are unique to those existing in the NEHBS database, and the expansion of knowledge regarding ethnic settlement, building technologies and architectural image.

In addition to these conceptual objectives, the Arthur County Historic Buildings Survey was intended to fulfill several numerical objectives as stated in the Research Design.

These quantitative objectives consisted of:

- A. The recording of an estimated 50 properties in Arthur County at the completion of the survey.

- B. The coverage of approximately 96,000 acres (150 square miles) in Arthur County.  
In addition, each street of the community of Arthur will be surveyed using reconnaissance survey methods.
- C. Identification of at least 15 properties worthy of nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.
- D. Identification of at least one possible Historic District or Multiple Property nominations eligible for National Register listing.
- E. Evaluating by the following hierarchy those properties which are eligible (E) or potentially eligible (P) for listing in the National Register, and those properties which contribute (C) to the database of extant material resources in the county.

A post-survey evaluation of these goals reveals that the Arthur County Historic Buildings Survey has, in general, satisfied its preliminary objectives. The satisfaction of these goals can be expressed in two quantifiable terms: numerical and geographic. Each street of the community of Arthur and every public rural road was surveyed using reconnaissance survey methods. The numbers produced by the survey are indicative of the comprehensive nature with which the survey was performed. A total of 112 contributing buildings, structures, objects and sites were documented on 29 individual properties. The survey canvassed approximately 95,120 acres (149 square miles) and identified 14 properties eligible or potentially eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

The Historic Buildings Survey of Arthur County has produced a diverse collection of historic material resources. This diversity of these resources is expressed in the range of Historic Contexts and Associated Property Types represented in the database of the

surveyed properties. The list of Historic Contexts recorded by the reconnaissance level survey includes the following themes as defined by the NESHPO (Historic Contexts in Nebraska--Topical Listing, 1989).

Historic Context	# of Properties
02.00. Religion: Religious/Ceremonial	1
02.10.01. Religion: Baptist Church in Nebraska	1
02.99. Religion: Other Protestant Faiths	1
04.03. Government: County Government	3
06.01. Education: Schooling	1
06.01.01. Education: Rural Education	1
07.05. Diversion: Travel and Tourism	1
08.08. Agriculture: Sand Hills Range Livestock Production	15
12.02.08. Commerce: Retail Commerce in the Sand Hills Region	3
13.03.01. Transportation: Rail Transportation	1
16.05. Settlement: Dwelling in Dispersed and Clustered Settlement	13

## Western Sandhills and High Plains Historic Buildings Survey

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### **A Topical Discussion and Preliminary Inventory of Arthur County Historic Properties**

The following discussion consists of a topical summary and Preliminary Inventory of historic properties documented during the Arthur County Historic Buildings Survey. This discussion is arranged according to the Topical Listing of Historic Contexts developed by the Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office (NESHPO, 1990). It includes summaries only of those historic contexts associated with properties judged eligible or potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Included at the end of each context summary is a photographic inventory of properties which appear eligible and potentially eligible for National Register. The eligible properties generally precede those considered potentially eligible. The properties labeled "potentially eligible" are included in the inventory for purposes of defining those buildings that may lack the significance or integrity for NRHP listing but which help define the character of the historic built environment of Arthur County. In addition, those properties already listed on the NRHP are included in the inventory according to their respective context.

#### **Historic Context: Religion**

The contextual topic of Religion encompasses any cultural manifestation relative to the faithful devotion of an acknowledged deity. This includes any social entity relating to sacred organizations and rituals or considered a sacred place. In terms of historic buildings and structures, this includes churches, parsonage-rectories, cemeteries, fellowship halls, and schools.

The reconnaissance survey of Arthur County recorded a total of three (3) properties associated with the context of Religion. Of the three Religion properties, The Pilgrim Holiness Church in Arthur (AT01-001), is the only one included in the Preliminary

## Western Sandhills and High Plains Historic Buildings Survey

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Inventory. Built of baled straw in 1928, the church was listed to the National Register of Historic Places since 1979. The building is a unique example of Nebraska folk architecture (See Historic Places, NEBRASKAland, 1989) and reflects the use of indigenous building materials. It is the only known church built of baled straw in the world. The following table outlines the basic data regarding the three properties surveyed in Arthur County relating to the context of Religion.

NEHBS NUMBER	DATE	RESOURCE/COMMON NAME	HISTORIC CONTEXT	CONTRIBUTING				PROPERTY TYPE	DOE
				BLDG.	SITES	STRU.	OBJ.		
AT01-001	C1925	PILGRIM HOLINESS CHURCH	02.00	1	0	0	0	02.1.4	NRHP
AT01-018	1943	ARTHUR COMMUNITY BAPTIST CHURCH	02.10.01	1	0	0	0	02.1.4	C
AT01-017	C1927	SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH	02.99	1	0	0	0	02.1.4	C

**NEHBS NUMBER:** AT01-001      Arthur  
**DATE:** 1928  
**RESOURCE NAME:** Pilgrim Holiness Church  
**HISTORIC CONTEXT:** Religion (02.00)  
**PROPERTY TYPE:** Church (02.1.4)  
**DOE:** National Register, 1979  
 Baled hay or straw provided an abundant alternative building material to lumber or sod and was used frequently in Arthur County. AT01-001 is a unique example of Nebraska folk architecture (See Settlement: Important Themes, p. 48).



### Historic Context:    Government

The contextual topic of Government encompasses the art or science of established government as well as competition between interest groups for leadership of local, state, or national government. Associated historic buildings include post offices, courthouses, community halls, and fire stations. Typically, the recording of buildings fitting this context has been somewhat low due presumably to the fact that it only takes one or two of these buildings to satisfy the governing needs of small communities. Beyond three



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Government properties previously surveyed by the NESHPO (AT01-004, AT01-005, AT01-006), the Historic Buildings Survey of Arthur County failed to record any Government buildings which met the criteria for reconnaissance level survey. The three properties surveyed by the NESHPO are located in the town of Arthur and relate to the sub-context of County Government. Pertinent information regarding the three properties associated with government in Arthur County is outlined in the following table.

NEHBS NUMBER	DATE	RESOURCE/COMMON NAME	HISTORIC CONTEXT	CONTRIBUTING				PROPERTY TYPE	DOE
				BLDG.	SITE	STRU.	OBJ.		
AT01-004	1915	FORMER ARTHUR COUNTY COURTHOUSE	04.03	1	0	0	0	04.1.7	NRHP
AT01-005		ARTHUR COUNTY JAIL	04.03	1	0	0	0	04.3.2	NRHP
AT01-006	C1960	ARTHUR COUNTY COURTHOUSE	04.03	1	0	0	0	04.1.6	C

The former Arthur County Courthouse (AT01-004) and the former Arthur County Jail (AT01-005), have recently been listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Built in 1915, the small frame courthouse was used until 1962 when a new courthouse building was constructed (AT01-006). The former courthouse is purportedly one of the smallest building of its type in the country and consists of a two-room plan measuring 20 feet by 26 feet. AT01-005, the former Arthur County Jail, also occupies land in the city park just south of the 1915 courthouse and east of the present courthouse. AT01-005 consists of a well preserved, one-story building of frame construction and brick chimney. Both the 1915 courthouse and jail are significant to the historic development of Arthur. AT01-004 and AT01-005 are contributors to historic context and property type development in Nebraska; reflecting county government practice in the sparsely populated Sandhills. A photographic inventory of the jail and former courthouse are presented on the following page.

## Western Sandhills and High Plains Historic Buildings Survey

**NEHBS NUMBER:** AT01-004      Arthur

**DATE:** 1915

**RESOURCE NAME:** Arthur County Courthouse

**HISTORIC CONTEXT:** Government (04.03)

**PROPERTY TYPE:** Courthouse (04.1.7)

**DOE:** National Register, 1990

Served as the county courthouse from 1915 until 1962 when a modern brick courthouse was built. Important stylistically and for contributions to context development in Arthur County.



**NEHBS NUMBER:** AT01-005      Arthur

**DATE:** C.1915

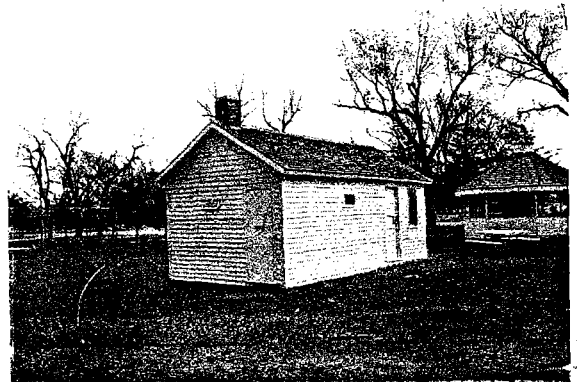
**RESOURCE NAME:** Arthur County Jail

**HISTORIC CONTEXT:** Government (04.03)

**PROPERTY TYPE:** Jail (04.3.2)

**DOE:** National Register, 1990

One-story, frame jail situated south of the original courthouse in the city park. Significant to the history of county government practice in Arthur County.



### Historic Context: Education

The contextual topic of Education encompasses any act or process which imparts or aids in the acquisition of knowledge. The primary emphasis of this context is focused upon the components of schooling and enrichment. Historic properties which fit this context include schools, libraries, and museums. Considerations include formal apprenticeship and enculturation; primary, elementary, junior, and senior high schools, colleges and universities; vocational, adult, continuing, specialty and professional education.

The Historic Buildings Survey of Arthur County recorded one education related

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property which met the criteria for reconnaissance level survey. In addition to this, the Arthur Schoolhouse (AT01-002) was surveyed in 1978 by the NESHPO. Both of these properties have been judged potentially eligible for National Register listing. The two properties surveyed relate to the sub-contexts of Schooling (H.C.: 06.01) and Rural Education (H.C.: 06.01.01). Consistent with the pattern established by previous historic buildings survey projects in Nebraska, the school buildings recorded in Arthur County fit into one of two established form types: the simple, one-room, frame hall-type building.

Predominantly found in the rural environs, one-room, hall-type schools appear to have been constructed primarily between 1900 and 1915. These buildings are typically one-story rectangular-shaped structures with a gable-end entry and were protected by a gable roof placed in longitudinal orientation to the road. Both school buildings recorded in Arthur County fit this type: AT01-002 and AT00-009.

The second type of school building identified in NEHBS projects is the "modern" school which generally consists of larger scale brick masonry buildings found primarily in town locations. These buildings were generally built between 1915 and 1930 and consist of a raised basement two-story masonry structure occupying the grounds of a single town block. Due to the low population base of Arthur County and lack of historic integrity, no school buildings of the "modern" type met the requirements for reconnaissance level survey.

NEHBS NUMBER: AT01-002      Arthur

DATE: C.1920

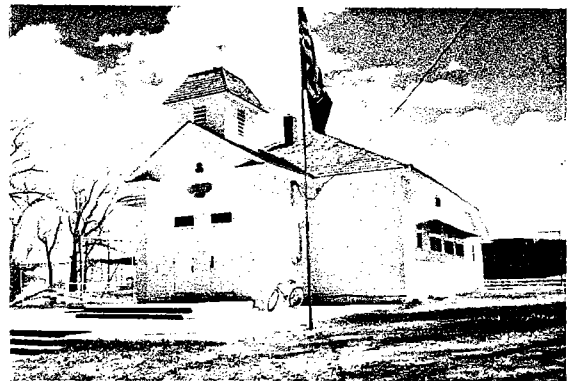
COMMON NAME: Arthur Public School

HISTORIC CONTEXT: Education (06.01)

PROPERTY TYPE: Public School (06.3)

DOE: Eligible

One-story frame school with entrance vestibule and bell tower. Built during the Development and Growth period (1890-1920), AT01-002 represents early town education in Arthur.



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NEHBS NUMBER: AT00-009 Rural  
 DATE: C.1915  
 COMMON NAME: Abandoned School  
 HISTORIC CONTEXT: Education (06.01.01)  
 PROPERTY TYPE: Hall Type School (06.3.1:1)  
 DOE: Potentially Eligible  
 One-story, frame school included in the Preliminary Inventory for its contribution to the context of Rural Education in Arthur County.



### Historic Context: Agriculture

Arthur County lies in the geographic zone known as the Sand Hills. This area is unique to Nebraska and is composed of hilly land of low to high dunes, stabilized by grasses. The nature of this sandy region yields little in terms of crops. Instead, the sandhills region has become an area devoted to range livestock production. Most land has remained uncultivated and serves as grassland ranges for cattle. Of the fifteen (15) agrarian properties identified by the reconnaissance survey, six (6) are worthy of being included in the Preliminary Inventory.

NEHBS NUMBER	DATE	RESOURCE/COMMON NAME	HISTORIC CONTEXT	BLDG.	SITES	CONTRIBUTING STRU.	OBJ.	PROPERTY TYPE	DOE
AT00-003	C1920	LAZY Y BAR RANCH	08.08	7	0	0	3	08.1	C
AT00-004	C1910	RANCH	08.08	2	0	0	0	08.1, 11.4.3:1	P
AT00-005	C1915	RANCH	08.08	2	0	0	0	08.1, 11.4.3:6	P
AT00-006	C1925	BARN ON N.C. RANCH	08.08	1	0	0	1	08.1.02	C
AT00-007	C1910	ABAN RANCH	08.08	7	0	0	0	08.1	C
AT00-008	C1920	ABAN RANCH	08.08	3	0	0	2	08.1	C
AT00-010	C1920	ABAN RANCH	08.08	2	0	0	2	08.1	C
AT00-012	C1929	RANCH	08.08	8	0	0	2	08.1	P
AT00-013	C1920	ABAN RANCH	08.08	8	0	0	4	08.1	P
AT00-014	C1929	FLYING V RANCH	08.08	7	0	0	3	08.1	P
AT00-015	C1929	NIELSON RANCH	08.08	2	0	0	1	08.1	C
AT00-017	C1912	ABAN RANCH	08.08	6	0	0	3	08.1	C
AT00-018	C1918	BARN	08.08	1	0	0	1	08.1.02	P
AT00-019	C1907	ABAN RANCH	08.08	4	0	0	1	08.1	C
AT00-001	C1890	J. BRATT BULL CAMP BUILDING	08.08	1	0	0	0	08.1	C

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The ranches documented by the survey are collectively viewed as an important historic resources for the state of Nebraska. They reflect early settlement in the sandhills region and provide a vast economic contribution to the state. The continued existence of some of the farmsteads documented in Arthur County is, however, doubtful. In fact, over one-third (40.0%) of the 15 total properties found in rural environs consist of abandoned properties. The majority of the ranches range in era of construction from approximately 1890 to 1930. They contain the basic buildings necessary for animal production such as livestock barns, loafing sheds, granaries, cribs, implement sheds, cellars, and hay barns.

Particular emphasis was placed on the observance of farm properties relating to Sand Hills Range Livestock Production agriculture (H.C.: 08.08). This agricultural type was identified by the NESHPO as the predominant agricultural enterprise in Arthur County (See Historic Contexts in Nebraska—Topical Listing, 1990). In consideration of the importance to the material resources found in Arthur County, the aforementioned agriculture historic context is discussed in greater detail in the following summary.

### AGRICULTURE HISTORIC CONTEXTS IN ARTHUR COUNTY

#### Introduction

Nebraska is a state of great diversity. Diversities exist among its people, its lands, its topography and, of more immediate concern to this discussion, its agriculture. The agricultural diversity of the state of Nebraska has been forged through one hundred years of adaptation and evolution in a land once labeled the "Great American Desert." During this time, the "desert" waste of Nebraska has been transformed into some of the most productive farm and ranch land in the United States.

The diversity of the agricultural industry in Nebraska is evident not only in

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geographic location but in historical development as well. The study of the various agricultural practises in Nebraska was first addressed in the 1930's by scientists from the University of Nebraska College of Agriculture. Their efforts focused upon defining a conceptual framework which would represent agriculture throughout the state. The result was the identification of type-of-farming, or system-of-farming areas which characterize regions by cropping and livestock systems. The publication of the type-of-farming definitions appeared in Research Bulletins issued by the College of Agriculture Experiment Station.

The term "type-of-farming" is used to describe a group of farms which are similar in size and enterprise combination. In this way, a group of farms having the same kind, quantity, and proportion of crops and livestock may be said to be following the same type of farming (Hedges and Elliott, p. 3). Likewise, the term type-of-farming area, refers to a region which contains a high degree of uniformity in agricultural production and in the physical and economic conditions under which production takes place.

The boundaries of the type areas do not conform to imposed government boundaries. In most cases, the transition from one region to another is gradual. The differences between the regions lie mainly in the dominant enterprises and their relative importance in the farming systems. In addition, variations within specific regions may differ as a result of terrain, soil types, and relative size of farms. In these cases, the definition of each type-of-farming area identifies the dominant farm system and the significant variations of that system within the region.

The boundaries delineated by the Agriculture College Research Bulletins (No. 244, Hedges and Elliott, May 1930; & No. 299, L.F. Garey, May 1936) were modified by the NESHPO to incorporate the regions into a framework suitable for preservation planning and historic

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context development. The framework developed by the NESHPO uses the characterization of agricultural activity in Nebraska as a tool in identifying, evaluating, and nominating significant historic resources to the National Register of Historic Places. Using the Research Bulletins as a basis, the NESHPO developed a ten region agricultural and geographic definition of the state. The ten areas redefined by NESHPO and incorporated into Historic Context framework are: 1. Southeastern General Farming (08.01), 2. Northeastern Intensive Livestock Production (8.02), 3. Lower Niobrara Livestock, Wild Hay and Cash Grain Production (08.03), 4. Loess Hills Livestock, General Farming, and Cash Grain Production (08.04), 5. Central Plains Cash Grain and Livestock Production (08.05), 6. Republican Valley General Farming, Cash Grain, and Livestock Production (08.06), 7. High Plains Cash Grain, Livestock and Potato Production (08.07), 8. Sand Hills Range Livestock Production (08.08), 9. Pine Ridge Range Livestock, Cash Grain and Potato Production (08.09), 10. Scottsbluff Livestock, Cash Grain and Root Crop Production (08.10).

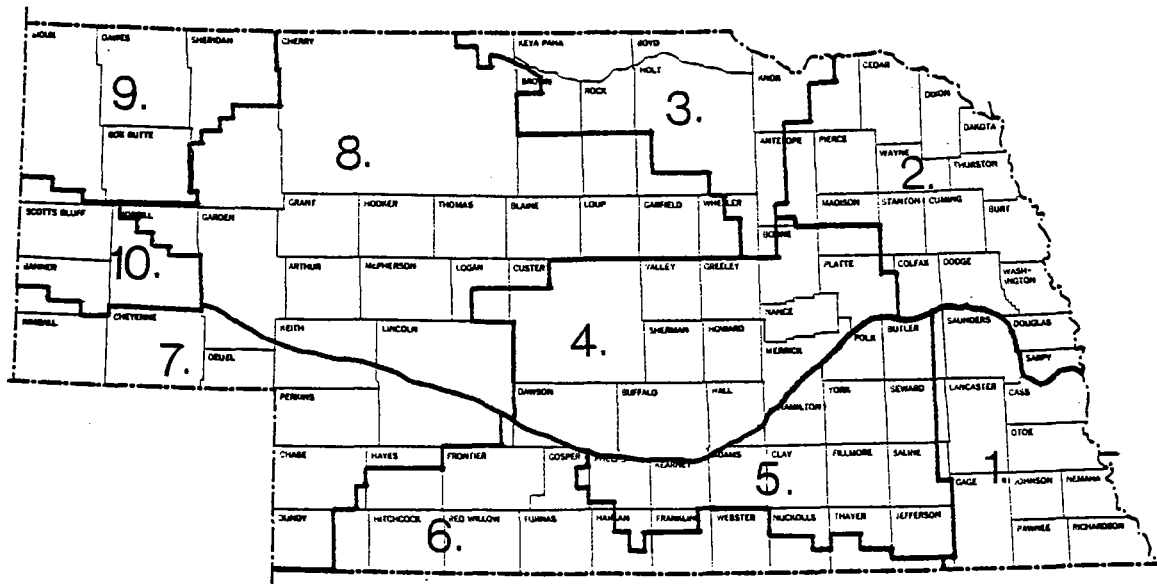


Fig. 1. Type-of-farming and Geographic Regions for the state of Nebraska

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As evidenced by the Regions Map in Figure 1 (p. 27), the Arthur County Historic Buildings survey area contains one type-of-farming region: Sand Hills Range Livestock Production (08.08). In consideration of its importance to the material resources found in Arthur County, the Sand Hills Range Livestock Production context is discussed in greater detail in the following summary.

### Sand Hills Range Livestock Production

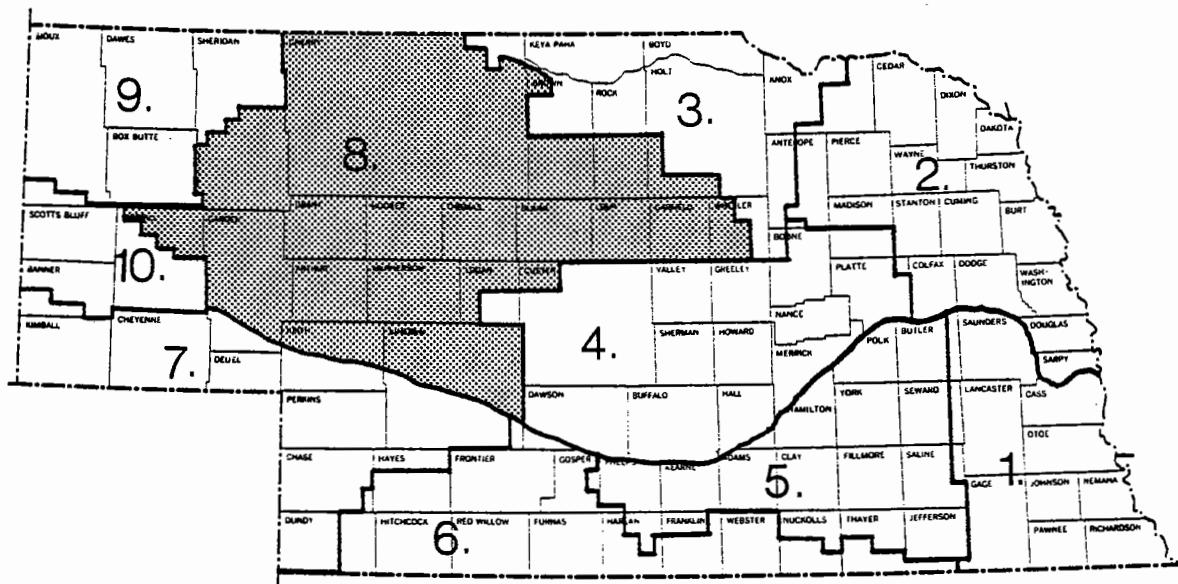


Fig. 2. The Sand Hills Range Livestock Production Area.

The Sand Hills Range Livestock Production region, in the north-central and northwest portions of the state, extends north from the Platte River Valley to the South Dakota border and varies in width from 100 to 200 miles. This region is the largest agricultural area identified by NESHPO and includes Cherry, Grant, Hooker, Thomas, Blaine, Loup, Arthur, Garfield and McPherson Counties. In addition to this, large portions of Brown, Rock, Holt,



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Wheeler, Morrill, Garden, Keith, Lincoln, Sheridan and Logan Counties also lie within the Sand Hills Range Livestock Production region.

One of the fundamental characteristics of this area is the extremely large proportion of land devoted to the grazing of cattle. True to its name, the area includes the Nebraska Sand Hills region, the largest soil and topographic region in the state (Garey 1936, p. 27). A distinctive geographic region, the Sand Hills cover approximately one-fourth of the state and comprise the most extensive dune formation in the western hemisphere (Madson 1978, p. 493). Characterized by low-lying sand dunes covered by native grasses, the Sand Hills are predominantly rangeland. There is little surface drainage due to the porous nature of the sandy soil, and beneath the vast dunes of the sandhills are large aquifers which can reach a depth of one-thousand feet. Between the hills are numerous basins which sometimes widen into larger valleys. In many of these valleys the high water table has risen above the surface of the land and formed marshes, ponds, and lakes. The effect of the high water table is most evident by the presence of the 13,000 lakes scattered on the landscape of the north and west regions of the Sand Hills (Madson 1978, p. 499).

The soils of the Sand Hills region are exceptionally fine in texture and extremely susceptible to blowing. For this reason, it is the goal of the cattle producers to maintain the native grass covers to prevent "blow-outs" of the dune tops and provide the necessary supplements for grazing. Due to the presence of the sandy soils, the Sand Hills Range Livestock Production area is not conducive to the production of cultivated crops. In 1936, only eight-percent of the area was deemed suitable for cultivation (Garey 1936, p. 49). Only four-percent of the entire region was classified as containing good soils and much of those areas were located along the river and streambeds (Garey 1936, p. 49).

Given such environmental conditions it is easy to understand why the land is utilized

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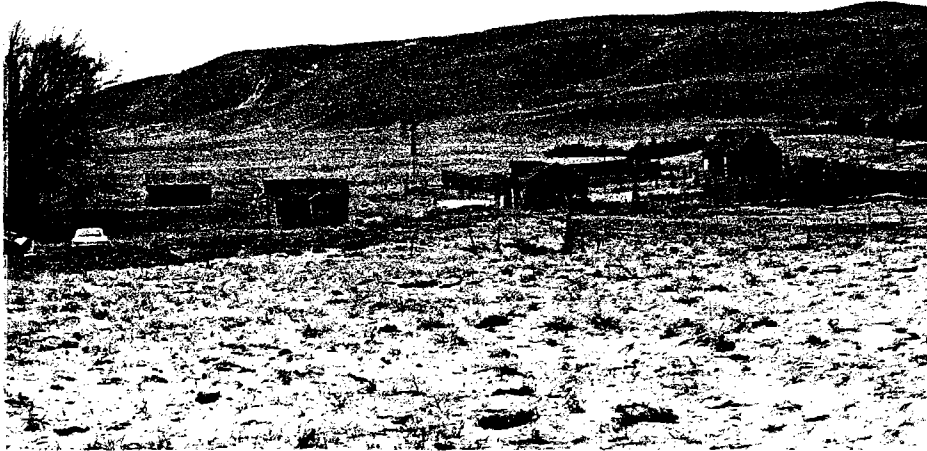
principally for the grazing of cattle. With more than 75 percent of the land in pasture and the majority of the remaining lands utilized for hay production, the cattle enterprise is the logical choice as the farming type in this region (Hedges and Elliott, p. 27). Hay, in combination with limited amounts of other grains provides the winter feed necessary for breeding herds. Since the grasses of the Sand Hills are not primarily suitable for the production of grass-fat cattle, these herds are maintained and the young cattle from the area are typically sent to the corn belt region prior to final shipment to market (Hedges and Elliott, p. 59).

The Sand Hills Range Livestock Production area, therefore, is essentially a cattle-raising area. The economic base of this region, today and historically, is almost entirely from the sale of cattle with a small proportion coming from crop and dairy products (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Utilization of Land in the Sand Hills Cattle  
Ranching Area, 1899-1928.**

Land Utilization	1899	1909	1919	1924	1928
Cultivated Area	.5%	2.0%	3.9%	4.1%	4.2%
Wild Hay	3.9%	8.3%	10.5%	10.5%	11.0%
Pastures	11.3%	42.2%	63.2%	66.4%	80.3%
Land not in farms	84.3%	47.5%	22.4%	19.0%	4.5%

In reviewing this table, we see that the predominant trend among ranches in the Sand Hills was the increase of pasture land for the grazing of cattle. The only region to display a dominance in a singular agricultural type (in this case cattle) was the Sand Hills Range Livestock Production area. Therefore, comparatively speaking, no other single agricultural type is as important to its respective region as the cattle industry is to the Sand Hills ranching area.

**Property Types of the Sand Hills Range Livestock Production Area**

In the property type discussions previously generated for the NESHPO regarding ethnic related contexts, the buildings of discussion were organized according to the separation of Old World and New World traditions. Unfortunately, the study of buildings associated with Sand Hills cattle ranching do not lend themselves to this conceptual separation. While it is acknowledged that the design and arrangement of farm buildings elsewhere in Nebraska may have been influenced considerably by cultural traditions, the buildings of the Sand Hills Range Livestock Production area are generally without a significant ethnic influence. This is in part due to the minimal influx of foreign-born immigrants as well as the overall lack of a population base capable of transferring ethnically-associated building characteristics. Even if the potential for variances in cultural design proves a valid concept in the Sand Hills ranching area, the nature of cattle production required a basic

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group of animal and human-related structures which were built with scarce materials and not a source for ethnic expression. The following property type discussion then, will focus upon basic structures associated with Sand Hills Range Livestock Production.

The sand hills ranching system requires a variety of buildings and skills necessary for the successful management of significant numbers of cattle. Ranches which have retained their pre-mechanization buildings had a variety of structures important to the reconnaissance level survey. The buildings found on Sand Hills cattle ranches are similar in some respects to those found on Intensive Livestock Production farms of northeast Nebraska: cattle barns, cattle loafing sheds, implement sheds, cattle fencing systems, windmills, windbreaks and the occasional small-scale corn crib. In addition to these animal-related structures, domestic buildings included the ranch or farm house, wash houses, privies, cellars, milk houses, smoke houses, tool sheds, and chicken houses.

Another group of buildings however, were found to be exclusive to the Nebraska Sand Hills Range Livestock Production area. These buildings were constructed to either meet needs of cattle or to shelter activities of the ranch hands employed in handling the herds. The buildings associated with the labor force include bunkhouses, saddle sheds, cookhouses, and commissaries. Specific structures or objects created exclusively for handling of cattle include dipping stations for cleaning and health maintenance of cattle, vaccination/branding stanchions for immunization and identification of stock, breaking pens for implementation of working stock, sorting pens for management and separation of bulls, calves and heifers, holding corrals usually located in outlying pasture land, and loading chutes for eventual shipping of sale-bound cattle.

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In addition to the fact that there exists a unique set of structures exclusive to Sand Hills cattle ranching, it is also important to note that visual characteristics of a Sand Hills ranch are also unique in comparison with other type-of-farming areas in Nebraska. The overpowering presence of the Sand Hills landscape immediately imparts a mentality of no-nonsense survival tempered by intriguing beauty. A description of a Sand Hills ranch is found in John Madson's trip to the Abbott Ranch in west-central Cherry County (National Geographic, Oct., 1978).

From the main highway the road back to the ranch is nine tough miles of ruts and sand traps. The farther you go, the more you wonder where you made the wrong turn. Suddenly, around the shoulder of a high ridge, there is ranch headquarters. The main house, in a grove of cottonwoods and box elders, is 67 years old, high-ceilinged and spacious. Nearby stand the bunkhouse and cookhouse, and set into the side of the ridge is a combination butcher shop, creamery, and commissary that can feed the ranch crew for two months if blizzards close the road.

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Across the ranch yard, a blacksmith forge and machine shop are equipped to serve either horse or tractor. Beyond the pens, corrals, loading chutes, and dipping tanks lies a broad, sheltered valley with herds of wintering cattle. There is a certain quality about a working ranch like this; it is a window into yesterday, with something unchanged since before the ranges were fenced.

And it is indeed true that the appearance of a Sand Hills ranch nestled among billowing hills imparts an ageless "old west" quality. A quality perhaps derived in part from its early beginnings as an outgrowth of the Texas cattle industry.

**NEHBS NUMBER:** AT00-004      Rural  
**DATE:** C.1910  
**COMMON NAME:** Ranch w/Sod House  
**HISTORIC CONTEXT:** Agriculture (08.08)  
**PROPERTY TYPE:** Ranch (08.1)  
                                  Sod Construction (11.4.3:6)

**DOE:** Potentially Eligible  
 Sod house with stucco sheathing built during the early twentieth-century. Significant as a contributor to the multiple property study of sod houses despite the conversion into a garage.



**NEHBS NUMBER:** AT00-005      Rural  
**DATE:** C.1915  
**COMMON NAME:** Ranch w/Baled Hay House  
**HISTORIC CONTEXT:** Agriculture (08.08)  
**PROPERTY TYPE:** Ranch (08.1)  
                                  Baled Hay (11.4.3:6)

**DOE:** Potentially Eligible  
 Included in the Preliminary Inventory as a possible baled hay or baled straw house as evidenced by the thick wall depth.



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NEHBS NUMBER: AT00-012 Rural  
 DATE: C.1929  
 COMMON NAME: Ranch  
 HISTORIC CONTEXT: Agriculture (08.08)  
 PROPERTY TYPE: Ranch (08.1)  
 Baled Hay (11.4.3:1)

DOE: Potentially Eligible  
 Thick walls suggest baled hay or baled straw construction in the house. Eight contributing buildings contribute to the historic integrity of this Sandhills ranch.



NEHBS NUMBER: AT00-013 Rural  
 DATE: C.1920  
 COMMON NAME: Abandoned Ranch  
 HISTORIC CONTEXT: Agriculture (08.08)  
 PROPERTY TYPE: Ranch (08.1)  
 DOE: Potentially Eligible

Despite deterioration, AT00-013 reflects early ranching (08.08) practice as exhibited by the eight contributing outbuildings and four contributing objects.



NEHBS NUMBER: AT00-014 Rural  
 DATE: C.1929  
 COMMON NAME: Flying V Ranch  
 HISTORIC CONTEXT: Agriculture (08.08)  
 PROPERTY TYPE: Ranch (08.1)  
 DOE: Potentially Eligible  
 Important example from the Spurious Economic Growth Temporal Period (Topical Listing: NESHPO 1990) with seven contributing buildings including a possible baled hay house.



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**NEHBS NUMBER:** AT00-018      Rural  
**DATE:** C.1918  
**COMMON NAME:** Barn  
**HISTORIC CONTEXT:** Agriculture (08.08)  
**PROPERTY TYPE:** Barn (08.1.02)  
**DOE:** Potentially Eligible  
 Well-preserved frame barn with gambrel roof and shed wings. Important contributor to historic context and property type development in Arthur County.



### Historic Context: Commerce

The context of Commerce is defined as the buying and selling of commodities, involving transportation from place to place. Considerations include wholesaling and retailing; gift exchange; trade and barter; monetary economy including finance, business organization, and mercantile business. Commerce encompasses a diverse range of businesses including general stores, hotels, speciality stores and department stores.

The Historic Buildings Survey of Arthur County recorded two (2) Commerce related properties which met the criteria for reconnaissance level survey. In addition, one other Commerce related property was surveyed by the NESHPO in 1978 (AT01-008). Among the three properties, one was judged eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (AT01-008). The three properties surveyed relate to the sub-context of Retail Commerce in the Sand Hills region (H.C.:12.02.08). Pertinent information regarding the three properties linked to Commerce in Arthur County is outlined in the following table.

NEHBS NUMBER	DATE	RESOURCE/COMMON NAME	HISTORIC CONTEXT	CONTRIBUTING				PROPERTY TYPE	DOE
				BLDG.	SITES	STRU.	OBJ.		
AT01-020	C1913	ABAN. COMMERCIAL BUILDING	12.02.08	1	0	0	0	12.1.1	C
AT01-022	C1914	COMMERCIAL BUILDING	12.02.08	1	0	0	0	12.1.1	C
AT01-008	C1909	COMMERCIAL BUILDING & HOUSE	12.02.08	2	0	0	0	12.1.1	E

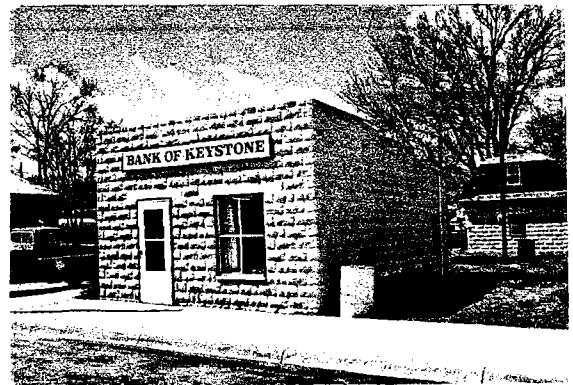


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Main street commercial buildings accounted for all of the three properties surveyed. These main street buildings can be categorized into two predominant types: the frame false-front and the masonry commercial building or block. False-front types were generally found in smaller communities and consisted of one-story rectangular-shaped structures with gable roofs hidden behind an exaggerated facade. The false front helped to disguise the relatively low scale of the building by hiding the true size of the structure and thus conveying a greater sense of prominence. The primary era of construction in Arthur County for this type was from 1912 to 1925. The second type documented by the survey, the masonry commercial building or block, were generally found in the larger communities of the survey area. These buildings were typically constructed between 1920 and 1930, and consisted of one and two-story masonry structures with one or two-part compositional facades. These buildings were often built on single twenty-five foot commercial lots or in double to triple wide commercial lots of fifty to seventy-five foot widths.

NEHBS NUMBER: AT01-008      Arthur  
DATE: C.1909  
COMMON NAME: Commercial Building and House  
HISTORIC CONTEXT: Commerce (12.02.08)  
PROPERTY TYPE: Store (12.1.1)  
DOE: Eligible  
One-story concrete block commercial building with one-story concrete block house situated behind. Major contributor to the commercial activities in Arthur during the period of Development and Growth.



### Historic Context: Settlement

Settlement is the broad contextual title encompassing the division, acquisition, occupation, and ownership of land. This context contains settlement patterns generated

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through political, religious or commercial activities to facilitate the establishment of cultural systems. Specific considerations include acquisition methods and use patterns of land as well as the spatial delineation and organization of land including hamlets, villages, towns, cities and the furthest delineation--the individual dwelling.

This contextual topic contained the second greatest number of documented historic properties within Arthur County. Of the 41 total properties residing in the Arthur County database, 13 or 31.7 % fall within the context of Settlement. The thirteen properties include nine (9) recently surveyed and four (4) previously surveyed sites which met the criteria for reconnaissance level documentation. The majority of these properties were recognized simply as contributors to the historic built environment of Arthur County. However, three (3) properties were judged eligible and two (2) potentially eligible for National Register listing.

The retention of historic integrity that the thirteen properties displayed was quite varied. In some instances, integrity had been severely compromised through later additions or alterations, while in other cases buildings were recorded which were extremely similar to their original condition.

The individual house-whether in an urban or a rural setting-is the most common feature of the built environment; it fulfills the basic human need for shelter. Houses represent the largest proportion of all buildings documented during reconnaissance level surveys. The Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey (NEHBS) for Arthur County was no exception: 24 houses were documented, or 24.2 percent of all the county's contributing buildings. Although houses are such a common part of our surroundings, describing them can be complex; variations result from style, age, building material, and even the ethnic heritage of owners or builders.

## Western Sandhills and High Plains Historic Buildings Survey

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Architectural histories and guide books often provide descriptions of houses during various periods of popularity in terms of style such as Italianate, Queen Anne, or Romanesque. Good examples of these houses are usually referred to as "high style". Houses that cannot be identified as a particular style and that are built from local materials such as log, stone, and sod are generally referred to as "folk" houses. Usually dating from the settlement era of a particular locality, folk houses were often built by immigrants who patterned them after buildings in their homeland. Age, distinctive building material, or unusual form makes these houses easy to identify during building surveys. Further research and comparison however, is necessary to determine how they might reflect "old world" buildings adapted to the Nebraska landscape.

During county-wide historic buildings surveys it becomes apparent that most houses are not associated with a specific architectural style, and that in many places, few survive from the settlement period. The goal of the Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey, however, is to document all types of houses--from large Queen Annes with corner towers and stained glass windows, to small two room, frame houses with simple porches.

The remaining houses that are not high style or folk, are generally referred to as "vernacular" or common. All houses, whether they are high style, folk, or vernacular, can be studied for form, floor plans, and distribution. In the case of folk and vernacular, documenting the form becomes especially important since there may not be other ways to describe these houses. Information about the basic form and features such as roof shape, and number of stories can reveal patterns or house types within a region, the work of a local builder or an ethnic group.

To document all houses, the Nebraska Historic Preservation Office uses a system derived in part from several vernacular house studies that was further developed for use

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during historic buildings surveys. Under this method, house types are categorized as "supratypes" to eliminate subjective descriptions based on "style." Instead, descriptions are based on the external mass of the house. The components of this method are defined as the following: Supratypes are categorizations based on the external massing of house, similar to that first developed by Kniffen (1936) under the ruberick of "type." The term "supratype" is used to distinguish it from other methods of type analysis which are based on external form and internal space, such as that developed by Glassie (1975).

Supratypes are defined by combinations of five massing elements derived from the core structure of the house--the predominant mass which cannot be further subdivided--exclusive of wings and porches. The five mass elements are shape, relative size, height, roof type, and orientation on the site (D. Murphy, 1989).

While this method has proved successful in surveys of Nebraska counties with large numbers of houses, the analysis of supratype descriptions in Arthur County was less significant due to the lack of a sufficient number of records (24) for analysis. Consequently, a discussion regarding the predominant house types in Arthur County was omitted from the analysis of settlement related properties.

**NEHBS NUMBER:** AT00-016      Rural  
**DATE:** C.1914  
**RESOURCE NAME:** Smith Ranch w/Baled Hay House  
**HISTORIC CONTEXT:** Settlement (16.05)  
**PROPERTY TYPE:** Single Family Dwelling (16.5.1)  
    Baled Hay (11.4.3:6)  
**DOE:** Eligible  
 Baled rye straw house with second story sleeping loft, shed dormer and frame kitchen wing. Significant example in the multiple property study of baled hay/straw construction despite garage conversion.



## Western Sandhills and High Plains Historic Buildings Survey

NEHBS NUMBER: AT01-003      Arthur  
 DATE: 1925  
 RESOURCE NAME: Ed Martin House  
 HISTORIC CONTEXT: Settlement (16.05)  
 PROPERTY TYPE: Single Family Dwelling (16.5.1)  
                     Hay Construction (11.4.3:6)

DOE: Eligible

Baled straw house exhibiting the use of indigenous building materials. Major contributor to the proposed multiple property study of baled hay construction in western Nebraska (See Future Recommendations).



NEHBS NUMBER: AT01-009      Arthur  
 DATE: C.1940  
 RESOURCE NAME: Emil Hornas House  
 HISTORIC CONTEXT: Settlement (16.05)  
 PROPERTY TYPE: Single Family Dwelling (16.5.1)  
 DOE: Eligible

One-story stucco house built of railroad ties. Significant in the study of alternative building materials in the Sandhills region.



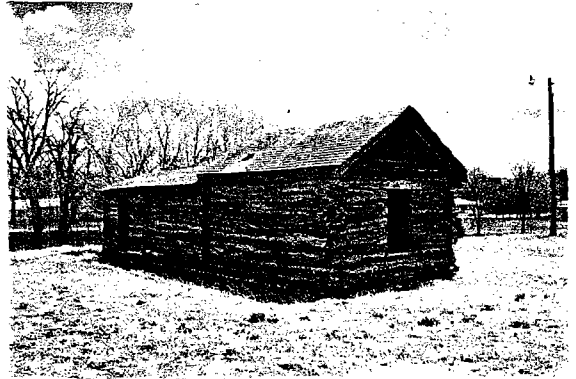
NEHBS NUMBER: AT00-011      Rural  
 DATE: C.1918  
 COMMON NAME: Abandoned Ranch House (16.05)  
 HISTORIC CONTEXT: Settlement (16.05)  
 PROPERTY TYPE: Single Family Dwelling (16.5.1)  
 DOE: Potentially Eligible  
 Significant as an early twentieth-century vernacular house. AT00-011 retains a high degree of historic integrity.



Western Sandhills and High Plains Historic Buildings Survey

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**NEHBS NUMBER:** AT01-010      Arthur  
**DATE:** C.1875  
**RESOURCE NAME:** Old Cody Ranch House  
**HISTORIC CONTEXT:** Settlement (16.05)  
**PROPERTY TYPE:** Single Family Dwelling (16.5.1)  
                            Log Construction (11.4.4:1)  
**DOE:** Potentially Eligible  
Relocated from rural environs to the town of Arthur, this "piece-sur-piece" constructed log house is important for associations with Buffalo Bill Cody and in the study of log construction.

**Important Themes of the Settlement Historic Context**

A post-survey evaluation of the settlement properties recorded by the Arthur County survey has identified certain resource groups which may be of potential interest to the NESHPO. The historic context of Settlement contains two multiple property topics worthy of further discussion: Native Material Buildings of the Western Sandhills and High Plains region and the Impact of the Homestead and Kinkaid Acts in the Western Sandhills and High Plains Region. A summary of these topics is presented in the following separate discussions. For examples of the properties associated with these topics, please refer to the Settlement Inventory found on pages 40 and 41 and the Agriculture Inventory on pages 34 and 35.

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**Native Material Buildings of the Western Sandhills and High Plains Study Region**

**Fig. 3: Abandoned sod house in rural Arthur County (AT00-004).**

The fundamental parameter of the Western Sandhills and High Plains Historic Buildings Survey was the recordation of buildings, structures, sites, and objects fifty years old or older which retained their historic integrity. By doing this, the NESHPO generates data regarding historic resources which is used to identify, evaluate, and register properties to the National Register of Historic Places. Based on its reconnaissance nature, the properties recorded by the survey display various levels of significance. While the majority of the buildings recorded met the integrity criteria required for reconnaissance survey, they generally did not carry a substantial amount of historic significance. However, in contrast to this were those buildings which not only retained historic integrity, but possess qualities which enhance their significance as historic material resources.

One such group of resources found during the Western Sandhills and High Plains survey that exhibit a greater level of significance are those buildings constructed from native materials during the periods of Settlement and Expansion (1867-1890), and Development and Growth (1890-1920). The most significant types of native material buildings among those found in Arthur County which date to these periods were those constructed of either sod or baled straw. Seperate discussions of these two construction methods is included in the following summaries.

#### **Sod Construction in the Western Sandhills and High Plains**

Fifty properties with sod buildings were recorded during the survey of Morrill, Garden, Keith, Perkins, Arthur, McPherson and Logan Counties. These counties represent seven of the eight county Western Sandhills and High Plains survey project. The majority of these fifty properties were located in Morrill County (28), with seven found in Garden County, six in McPherson County, four in Logan County, three in Perkins County and one in each Arthur and Keith Counties (see Sod House Inventory, p. 47). In addition to the importance of their structural systems, these buildings were also considered significant for their potential association with Homestead or Kinkaid Act settlement.

The sod houses recorded in the region consist of massive sod "brick" walls measuring up to twenty-four inches in thickness. There were two kinds of ground within the region suitable for use. The short alkali grass sod was most suitable but was only found in lower levels. Black root sod was also sufficient and was found in greater abundance in the higher elevations. Bunch grass sod was not suitable for construction due to the lack of a strong root system.





**Fig. 4: Loading sod for building a sod house near the Dismal River in Thomas County.**  
(Photo: Nebraska State Historical Society).

The sod used for the houses was cut with a sod plow which would flip over one strip of sod approximately eighteen to twenty-four inches wide. These strips were then cut to desired length and stacked in alternating fashion with the grass-side down. The sod "bricks" had to be of similar thickness to keep the walls plumb. The walls were carefully laid to accommodate openings and were trimmed with a sharp spade for smoothness.

In addition to finding adequate sources of sod, settlers were also challenged by the creation of a quality plaster. The most effective method employed in the region involved locating a low swampy spot and digging two to three feet down to obtain a sticky bluish-colored gumbo. This was then mixed with water and sand to make a serviceable plaster. The walls of the sod houses were generally covered on the exterior with the gumbo-based plaster. However, examples of sod houses with no evidence of exterior plaster were also recorded.

The sod houses found in the region have a distinctly low and bulky appearance and are often identifiable by their lack of plumb walls and corners. The exterior wall height of the soddies was considerably shorter than that of frame structures and little, if any,



**Fig: 5: Sod house in rural Arthur County, (AT00-004).**

fenestration was included in the north walls of the buildings. The house typically contained rectangular two-room plans with a narrow side dimension of thirty feet or less. However, in some cases, a large one-story square-shaped plan in a basic four-square configuration was also recorded. The general era of construction for the Homestead-Kinkaid era sod houses ranged from approximately 1890 to as late as 1916. However, exceptions to this are found in the sub-group of houses built as novelties or as a result of Depression-era poverty.

The physical condition of the sod houses recorded by the survey was quite varied. In some instances, the only physical remains of a dwelling are sod wall ruins while in others, the sod structures are well maintained.

Based on their importance as significant material resources within the Western Sandhills and High Plains region, the fifty sod houses recorded by the survey are

recommended for multiple property nomination to the National Register, (see p. 59). An inventory of the properties containing sod houses, as recorded by the survey, is included below.

### Sod House Inventory for the Western Sandhills and High Plains Historic Buildings Survey

#### MORRILL COUNTY

MO00-018	c.1940	Sod house
MO00-024	c.1885	Withers sod house
MO00-028	c.1895	Loomis sod house
MO00-031	c.1900	Sod house
MO00-035	c.1910	Potential sod house
MO00-038	c.1885	Sod house
MO00-056	c.1910	Sod house
MO00-064	c.1908	Sod house
MO00-065	1912	Carl Nichols sod house
MO00-068	c.1910	Sod house
MO00-069	c.1905	Sod house
MO00-073	c.1910	Sod house
MO00-084	c.1912	Sod house
MO00-085	c.1908	Sod house
MO00-094	c.1908	Sod house
MO00-095	c.1903	Sod house
MO00-099	c.1905	Sod house
MO00-102	c.1888	Sod house
MO00-105	c.1913	Sod house
MO00-118	c.1900	Sod house ruins
MO00-119	c.1888	Two sod dugouts
MO00-134	1905	Sod house
MO00-140	c.1908	Sod house
MO00-143	c.1910	Greenwood Ranch sod house
MO00-148	c.1905	Sod house
MO00-165	c.1911	Sod house
MO03-001	c.1914	Sod house
MO03-054	c.1910	Sod house

#### PERKINS COUNTY

PR00-053	c.1910	Altered sod house
PR00-065	c.1905	Sod house ruins
PR00-073	c.1905	Sod house

#### KEITH COUNTY

KH00-065	c.1911	Sod house
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#### LOGAN COUNTY

LO00-005	c.1900	Ranch w/Sod House
LO00-010	c.1912	Altered Sod House
LO00-012	c.1905	Ranch w/Sod House
LO00-019	c.1913	Sod House on N.C. Ranch

#### McPHERSON COUNTY

MP00-004	c.1907	Aban. Sod House
MP00-009	c.1912	Cumpston Sod House
MP00-013	c.1905	Sod House on Non-Contributing Ranch
MP00-015	1910	Trumbull Homestead w/Sod House
MP00-026	c.1910	Melvin Ranch w/Sod House
MP03-005	c.1907	John Seeley Sod House

#### ARTHUR COUNTY

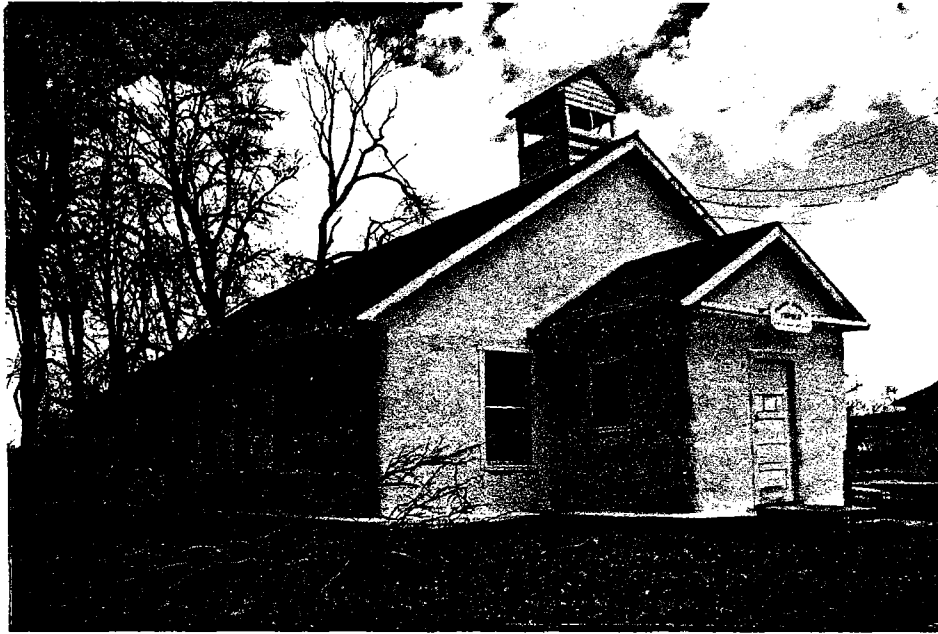
AT00-004	c.1910	Ranch w/Sod House
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#### GARDEN COUNTY

GD00-067	c.1914	Ranch w/Sod House
GD00-070	c.1913	Ranch w/Sod House
GD00-071	c.1910	Sod House Ruins
GD00-072	c.1911	Aban. Sod House
GD00-073	c.1912	Ranch w/Sod House
GD00-074	c.1914	Ranch w/Sod House
GD03-029	c.1912	Sod House

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### Baled Straw Construction in the Western Sandhills and High Plains



**Fig. 6: Pilgrim Holiness Church constructed in 1928 with baled straw walls (AT01-001).**

Seven properties with confirmed or purported baled straw construction were recorded during the survey of Arthur and Logan Counties. In addition to this, two baled straw buildings were previously recorded by the NESHPO in Arthur County: the Pilgrim Holiness Church (AT01-001), and the Ed Martin House (AT01-003). These buildings are located in two of the eight counties surveyed; no other baled straw buildings were recorded in the six remaining counties within the project area.

The nine buildings are considered extremely important historic resources for their rare and locally unique use of baled straw construction technology. In addition to this, these buildings were also considered significant for their potential association with Kinkaid Act settlement and Sand Hills Range Livestock Production agriculture.

In contrast to the construction date of the Pilgrim Holiness Church in Arthur (1928),

the era of baled straw construction was concurrent with the influx of Kinkaid Act homesteaders into the region. Along with the homesteaders came the need to build suitable houses and farm buildings. The lack of trees for log construction and the difficulty in cutting sod blocks from the sandy soil prompted claimants in the region to seek alternative building materials. With the abundant grasses which grew in the sandhills, baled straw proved to be an inexpensive and readily available building material.



**Fig. 7: Detail of baled straw house.**

The straw buildings recorded in the region consist of massive baled straw walls measuring up to twenty-four inches in thickness. Most often, a horse-drawn baler was used to tie the bales of rye straw with wire. The bales were then stacked in alternating courses and rough plastered with a mud mixture from local marshes or ponds. A final coat of stucco was then applied for the finish sheathing. In certain cases, additional coats of stucco were applied later by driving wood stakes for nailers through the original stucco and attaching a wire mesh to hold the new finish coat.

The use of baled straw construction in the Sandhills region was discussed by David

Murphy (NESHPO) in the National Register nomination of the Pilgrim Holiness Church in Arthur County, Nebraska (May, 1979).

Baled straw construction represents a significant folk architectural response to the vast Nebraska Sandhills environment--a distinct, semi-arid ecosystem of sand dunes stabilized by grass cover and characterized by the almost total lack of traditionally suitable building materials. While materials were available locally throughout the region for sod construction, the ecology in a general sense was not suitable for its use. The Sandhills magnified the difficulties of the previous homestead lands: they were even more barren of trees and the weather was even more hostile. Furthermore, the sandy soil made poor construction sod, for if it did not disintegrate during cutting and handling, it would soon crumble after being laid up in walls.

Sandhills grasses, however, when cut and baled, and protected with stucco or plaster proved to be a suitable material capable of withstanding the environmental stresses of the region.

#### Inventory of Baled Straw Properties for the Western Sandhills and High Plains Survey

##### LOGAN COUNTY

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LO00-006 :	C.1923	Baker Ranch Baled Straw House
LO00-023 :	C.1914	Former Baled Straw House

##### ARTHUR COUNTY

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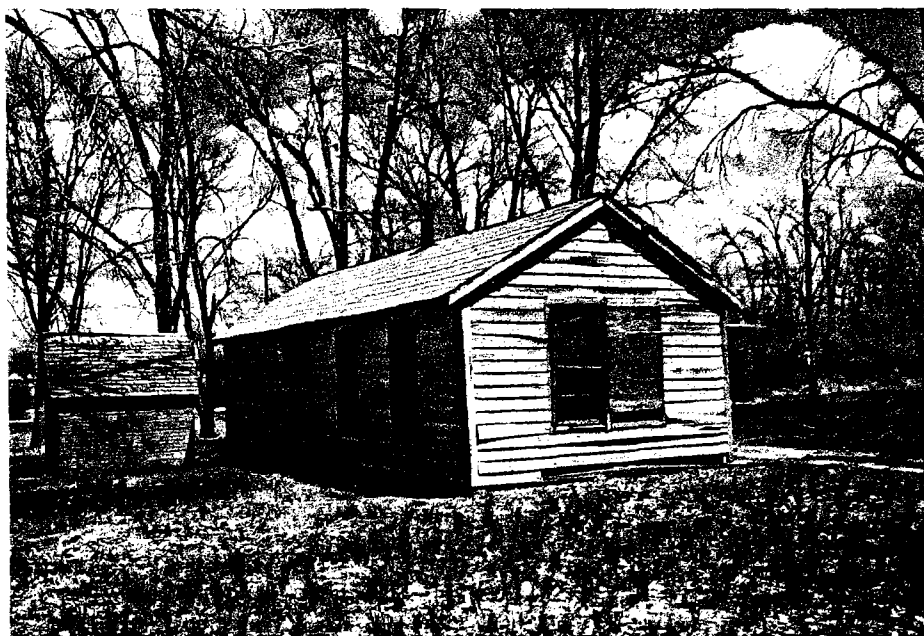
AT00-016 :	C.1914	Casey Smith Baled Straw House
AT01-001 :	1928	Pilgrim Holiness Church
AT01-003 :	1925	Ed Martin House

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## THE IMPACT OF THE KINKAID AND HOMESTEAD ACTS IN THE WESTERN NEBRASKA SAND HILLS

### Introduction

The Homestead Act, and more importantly the Kinkaid Act, had a significant impact on the settlement of the Sand Hills region. Under the patronage of these acts, the population of the Sand Hills region increased tremendously. The influx of settlers spawned an era of economic prosperity which witnessed the construction of a significant number of rural buildings. In order to satisfy the requirements of their claim, the first homesteaders and later Kinkaiders, were required to reside on their allotted claims for a specified number of years, which necessitated the construction of buildings for human and animal occupancy.



Due to the significant influence of these acts on the settlement and built environment of the western Sand Hills, a discussion of their provisions and impact follows.

### The Homestead Act of 1862

During the first two decades of the settlement of Nebraska (1855-1875), the Sand Hills

region was left largely unsettled and remained part of Nebraska's unorganized territory. The entire region was known as Sioux Indian country and official business was conducted through Cheyenne County. By the late 1870's and early 1880's, the Sand Hills area was beginning to experience its first influx of settlers. The period of initial settlement that followed (1880 to 1890), was one of generally good conditions and settlement increased at a steady rate. It was during this period that the first impact of the Homestead Act of 1862 was felt in the Nebraska Sand Hills region. The first claims filed in the Sandhills counties of the study region (Garden, Arthur, McPherson, and Logan) occurred between 1882 and 1892.

The Homestead Act of 1862 provided up to one-quarter section of "free" land (160 acres) to heads of families who had paid the \$10.00 filing fee and resided on or cultivated the land for five consecutive years. Supplemental to the Homestead Act was the Timber Culture Act approved by Congress in 1873 which provided additional one-quarter sections if the homesteader planted 40 acres of trees and maintained them for ten years.

Prior to the influx of homesteaders into the Sand Hills, a portion of the region was occupied by large cattle companies who used the public domain of the open range for cattle grazing. When the homesteaders began to stake their claims the open range land used by the cattle companies was divided into 160 to 320 acre holdings (Olson, p. 192). The majority of homesteaders, in compliance with the Act, began to cultivate the land of the northern Sand Hills. However, this proved to be an ill-fated decision due to the high susceptibility of the sand-based soil to erosion.

Once the grass covered mantle was plowed, large "blow-outs" resulted and the land which had been cultivated was rendered useless. By the end of the 1880's, the perception of the Sand Hills as an inadequate region for cultivation had been realized (Tubbs, p. 117).





In the 1890's , faced with drought, grasshoppers, and economic depression, many settlers returned east or moved further west and the area experienced its first loss in population. Because of the events of this decade, the ultimate impact of the Homestead Act in the western Sand Hills was relatively short-lived and uneventful. This however, is in marked contrast to the impact of the Act in Nebraska as a whole.

Under the impetus of the Homestead Act and other land promotions, settlers poured into the state, literally by the thousands. The population of Nebraska increased from 452,402 in 1880 to 1,058,910 in 1890, a total increase of 134% (Olson, p. 195). Also during the decade of the prosperous 1880's, twenty-six counties were organized throughout the state leaving only four counties as yet unorganized. While a great deal of credit must be given to settlement that resulted from the arrival of the railroads, it was through the Homestead Act and related federal legislation that much of Nebraska's rural lands were settled (Olson, p. 157).

Despite the statewide success of the Homestead Act, the only successful use made of

the law in the Sand Hills was by cattlemen who used it to secure stream fronts and water holes. In fact, a great deal of the Sand Hills area had never been homesteaded and was used only for open grazing (Tubbs, p. 118). The condition of the homesteaders in the Sand Hills region during the 1880's convinced much of the population that the settlement of the area under the existing Homestead or Timber Claim Acts was not satisfactory. The land which the settlers could obtain was not sufficient for sustaining a livelihood in the Sand Hills region. Even in the areas of the Sand Hills where cultivation was possible, 160 to 320 acres was simply not an adequate amount for a single-family property.

#### **Failed Settlement Legislation**

The original intent of the Homestead Act was to distribute the land in humid areas east of the 100th meridian but it made no provisions for increasing the size of the claim for those areas with insufficient rainfall or inadequate soils (Reynolds, p. 20). The desperate plight of the homesteader in the Sand Hills region gradually gained the support of regional and national politicians. In fact, prior to the drought-stricken 1890's, the Public Lands Commission of 1879 recommended a homestead on grazing lands of four square miles. Cattlemen, however, were naturally satisfied with existing conditions and the four section recommendation was never accepted.

The idea of an enlarged homestead as a means of settling the Sand Hills was revived by T.A. Fort of North Platte following the drought of 1890 (Tubbs, p. 118). Fort proposed homestead claims of two square miles (2,560 acres) with a requirement of five years residence and annual improvements on the land (Tubbs, p. 118). By 1900, Fort had interested the recently elected Congressman William Neville in his new proposal. In 1901, Neville introduced a bill to provide a two-square mile homestead but the proposal never advanced past the committee stage (Tubbs, p. 118).

### **The Kinkaid Act of 1904**

One year later, in 1902, President Theodore Roosevelt called attention to the inadequacy of the quarter-section homestead in the arid western lands. Although Roosevelt made no specific proposals, congressional action soon followed. The leadership for this action was assumed by Moses P. Kinkaid of O'Neill, Nebraska, who had defeated Neville in the 1902 race for the sixth district congressional seat. In April 1904, Kinkaid introduced a bill to the House of Representatives which would eventually change the settlement history of much of western Nebraska. The intent of the bill was to amend the homestead laws regarding the "unappropriated and unreserved lands in Nebraska," (Reynolds, p. 21).

The bill, as presented to the Committee on Public Lands, recommended homesteads of 1,280 acres in thirty-seven Nebraska counties, to be acquired by a residence of five years and improvements of \$1.25 per acre for each acre claimed. The committee amended the bill to 640 acres and recommended it to the House on April 13, 1904, stating that the increased size of the claim would compensate homesteaders for what the land lacked in quality, (Reynolds p. 22). The report by the committee emphasized that from 1875 to 1904, the land to which the bill applied had been rejected by homesteaders who had settled only on quarter sections good enough to support cultivation. This pattern had left open for settlement the semi-arid grazing lands incapable of supporting a profitable farm on only 160 acre tracts of land (Reynolds, p. 22). The report also stated that, in numerous cases, the homesteaders who filed claims on the unsuitable areas had done so with the intention of selling out to cattlemen once they fulfilled the claim requirements. A committee was appointed to work out the differences between the two bills and after approval of both Houses, the Kinkaid Act was signed by President Roosevelt on April 28, 1904.

The final form of the bill provided homestead units of up to 640 acres and that lands

which could be irrigated should not be open to entry (Reynolds p. 23). The Kinkaid Act applied to the northwestern two-thirds of the state of Nebraska; the entire area involved was west of the 98th meridian.

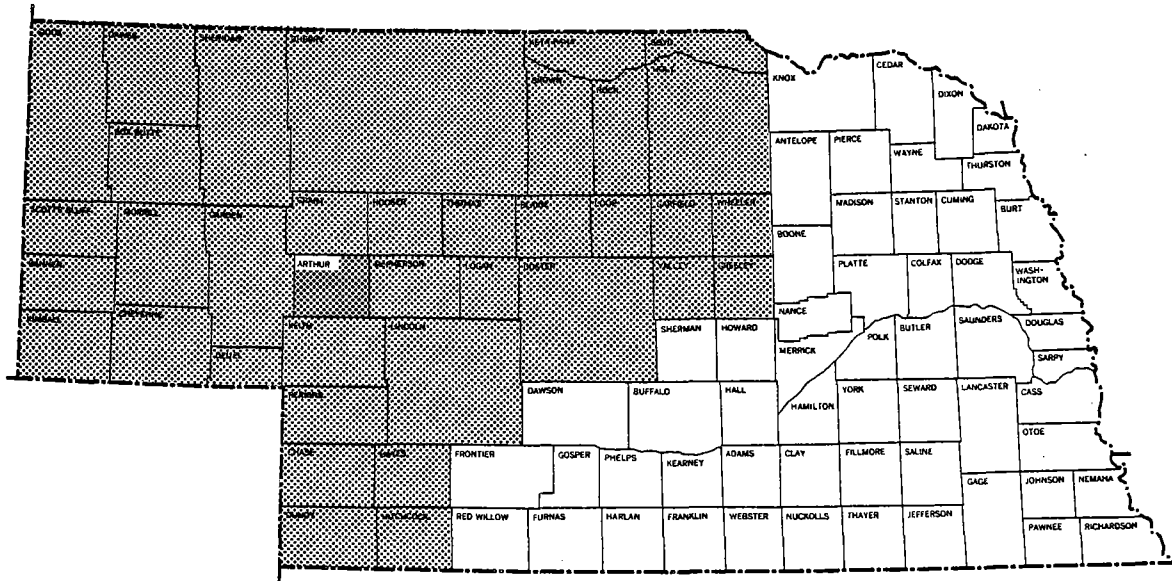


Fig. 7: Approximate area of Nebraska affected by Kinkaid Act legislation.

When the Kinkaid Act went into effect on June 28, 1904, the area included under its provisions was served by seven United States land offices which were located at Alliance, Sidney, O'Neill, McCook, Broken Bow, North Platte, and Valentine, Nebraska. On the first day that 640-acre homesteads were available, crowds converged upon each of these local land offices to file Kinkaid claims (Reynolds, p. 23). Two years later, the *Western Nebraska Observer*, published in Kimball, reported that the houses of the Kinkaiders could be seen all over the countryside and that the settlers were filled with hopes for the future.

Between June 1904, and June 1910, some 1,600 patents were granted for approximately 800,000 acres in the area affected by the Kinkaid Act. Statistics compiled by the Department of the Interior showed a rapid increase in population between 1900 and 1910 in 31 of the 37 counties where the law was applicable. The population of these counties in

1900 was 107,434; and in 1910, 162,217; the increase was over fifty-percent in the first decade of the twentieth-century and the Kinkaid Act was in effect for only six of those years (Reynolds, p. 28).

Kinkaid claims were filed until the end of 1912 when most of the available government land had been filed upon, (Reynolds, p. 25). With the five-year residence provision, this meant the effect of the Kinkaid law was finally determinable in 1917. In addition to the patents filed from 1904 to 1910, a total of 18,919 patents were granted for 8,933,527 acres between November 1910 and the close of the 1917 fiscal year. After 1917, the acreage annually alienated rapidly declined as most homesteaders who had filed Kinkaid claims or additional entries, had completed their final proofs. However, as late as 1941, one Kinkaid patent was issued for a 40-acre additional entry. (Reynolds, p. 26).

While many of the claims were filed in good faith, the Kinkaid Act did provide the opportunity for fraudulent land schemes. In January 1905, the *Western Nebraska Observer* pointed out that many of the homesteaders had erected shanties on their claims but were not living on the premises. In the summer of 1905, the *Observer* again noted that very little in the way of improvements had been made and that only a few entryman had taken a claim in good faith with the intention of establishing a home. (Reynolds, p. 24). In 1909, the Commissioner of the General Land Office reported that in approximately twenty-five percent of the filings, the proof was found to be deficient, and perhaps fraudulent. In those cases final proof was refused.

The soddy was described as the most common and the most ideal for Kinkaid home because it was easily and cheaply constructed. The soddy was cool in summer and warm in winter which were important features in the extreme climate of western Nebraska. (Reynolds, p. 27). In March 1910, the *Observer* described the improvements on one of the better homesteads in Kimball County. The Kinkaider had lived on his claim for one year, and his

improvements, in addition to 40 fenced acres, consisted of a four-room house, a barn, a well, a hen house, and a windmill. (Reynolds, p. 24).

In 1916 the First Assistant Secretary of the Interior Department reported that dwellings of stone, cement, or frame construction, plastered and provided with conveniences, had generally supplanted the original sod dwellings of Kinkaiders. He described barns and silos that had been built for protecting livestock and storing crops.

### Conclusion

The Kinkaid Act of 1904 had a tremendous impact on the settlement of the Nebraska Sandhills region. Between June 1904, and June 1914, a total of 6,726,516 acres had been patented out of an approximate total of 11,000,000 acres that were opened to one-section settlement. Of the total acreage patented 6,411,963 acres were in the hands of what were termed small holders, and only 316,453 acres were in the hands of large holders, or those possessing over 2,000 acres, (Reynolds, p. 28).

The period of historic importance for this act was 1904 to approximately 1920, and during this time, the intent to disburse the unreserved lands of Nebraska had proved successful. By the end of 1916, seventy-two percent of the acres claimed were still owned by the original filing parties.

Through the promoted development of the lands, the Kinkaid Act had increased the population and advanced the public welfare in the Sandhills region of Nebraska.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE WORK**

Throughout the duration of the Arthur County survey, random observations were recorded concerning historic context themes which appear potentially significant based on their extant material resources. The general impressions recorded by the survey team were then combined with a post-survey analysis of all documented properties to determine recommendations for future work. The recommendations include National Register nominations as presented in the Preliminary Inventory (see p. 19-42) and suggestions for historic context development.

### **Potential Historic Context Reports**

The Agriculture Historic Context report of potential significance within the survey area is Sand Hills Range Livestock Production (H.C.: 08.08). A summary of the major components of this type-of-farming is found in the Agriculture inventory starting on page 24. The number of associated properties and the importance of agriculture to the region and state makes this an apparent choice.

In addition, two Settlement related contexts appear significant with regard to the surveyed properties in Arthur County: Dwelling in Dispersed and Clustered Settlement (H.C.: 16.05) and Land Ownership: The Kinkaid Act of 1904 (H.C.: 16.01). The impact of the Kinkaid and Homestead Acts on the settlement of the western Sandhills is discussed further on pages 51 through 58.

Other topics of potential multiple property development include the study of native material buildings in Arthur County. This study would focus upon the further research of sod and baled straw buildings identified by the survey. For a more detailed discussion of the buildings related to sod and baled straw construction, please refer to page 43.

## Conclusion

It is the belief of those associated with this project that people, and the places in which they live, are the raw materials of history. A community, its inhabitants and its development through time are proper subjects for our contemplation, for it is through such studies that we gain a fuller comprehension of the present. The value of cultural material studies and preservation of historic buildings was politically expressed on a national level in 1966 by Senator Edmund Muskie of Maine as he addressed the eighty-ninth Congress of the United States regarding the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act.

"In less than 200 years, America has grown from a sparsely populated agricultural community of States to the most urbanized and technologically advanced Nation in the world. During these 20 decades and before, American genius has created marvels of mortar and stone... In the next four decades alone, our expanding population and urbanization will require more construction than we have witnessed during our first 20 decades. This means that much of what we have created to date is threatened by the thrust of bulldozers or the corrosion of neglect. In many instances, efforts to preserve sites of architectural and historic value will be too late. America must move promptly and vigorously to protect the important legacies which remain. This we can achieve without blunting our progress. And this achievement will enrich our progress. With sensitive planning, the past and the future can live as neighbors and contribute jointly to the quality of our civilization."

In the year 1990, America has now passed the halfway point in the four decade period of expansion delineated by Senator Muskie. Have we achieved the balance of preserving our past while progressing toward the future? In some cases we have, but in many others we have not. This is not to say that all older buildings are worthy of preservation. Many of the older buildings which stand in the path of necessary expansion have rightfully been removed. However, the heightening of public awareness and the education of our elected public officials towards the concept of historic preservation is a topic not open to subjectivity. It is imperative that the documentation and review of threatened historic



buildings be conducted and appropriate decisions be made regarding the cultural value of historic buildings. It is toward this goal that the Western Sandhills and High Plains region has been researched and documented. It is the hope of those involved with this project that the historic properties within the region will be enjoyed by many future generations of Nebraska citizens.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1: Arthur County Town and Rural Inventory Listings of All Surveyed Properties

## AT00: RURAL, ARTHUR COUNTY INVENTORY

NEHBS NUMBER	DATE	RESOURCE/Common NAME	HISTORIC CONTEXT	BLDG	SITE	CONTRIBUTING STRU. OBJ.	PROPERTY TYPE	DOE	
=====									
AT00-001	C1890	J. BRATT BULL CAMP	08.08	1	0	0	0	08.1	C
AT00-002	C	GANDY U.P. DEPOT	13.03.01	1	0	0	0	13.5.2	C
AT00-003	C1920	LAZY Y BAR RANCH	08.08	7	0	0	3	08.1	C
AT00-004	C1910	RANCH	08.08	2	0	0	0	08.1, 11.4.3:1	P
AT00-005	C1915	RANCH	08.08	2	0	0	0	08.1, 11.4.3:6	P
AT00-006	C1925	BARN ON N.C. RANCH	08.08	1	0	0	1	08.1.02	C
AT00-007	C1910	ABAN RANCH	08.08	7	0	0	0	08.1	C
AT00-008	C1920	ABAN RANCH	08.08	3	0	0	2	08.1	C
AT00-009	C1915	ABAN SCHOOL	06.01.01	1	0	0	0	06.3.1:1	P
AT00-010	C1920	ABAN RANCH	08.08	2	0	0	2	08.1	C
AT00-011	C1918	ABAN RANCH HOUSE	16.05	2	0	0	1	16.5.1	P
AT00-012	C1929	RANCH	08.08	8	0	0	2	08.1	P
AT00-013	C1920	ABAN RANCH	08.08	8	0	0	4	08.1	P
AT00-014	C1929	FLYING V RANCH	08.08	7	0	0	3	08.1	P
AT00-015	C1929	NIELSON RANCH	08.08	2	0	0	1	08.1	C
AT00-016	C1914	SMITH RANCH W/HAY HOUSE	16.05	6	0	0	1	16.5.1, 11.4.3:6	E
AT00-017	C1912	ABAN RANCH	08.08	6	0	0	3	08.1	C
AT00-018	C1918	BARN	08.08	1	0	0	1	08.1.02	P
AT00-019	C1907	ABAN RANCH	08.08	4	0	0	1	08.1	C

## AT01: ARTHUR, ARTHUR COUNTY INVENTORY

NEHBS NUMBER	DATE	RESOURCE/Common NAME	HISTORIC CONTEXT	CONTRIBUTING			PROPERTY	DOE
				BLDG. SITE	STRU. OBJ.	TYPE		
AT01-001	C1925	PILGRIM HOLINESS CHURCH	02.00	1	0	0	02.1.4, 11.4.3:6	NRHP
AT01-002	C1920	ARTHUR SCHOOLHOUSE	06.01	1	0	0	06.3	E
AT01-003	1925	ED MARTIN HOUSE	16.05	1	0	0	16.5.1, 11.4.3:6	E
AT01-004	1915	FORMER ARTHUR COUNTY COURTHOUSE	04.03	1	0	0	04.1.7	NRHP
AT01-005		ARTHUR COUNTY JAIL	04.03	1	0	0	04.3.2	NRHP
AT01-006	C1960	ARTHUR COUNTY COURTHOUSE	04.03	1	0	0	04.1.6	C
AT01-007	C1913	NON-EXTANT HOUSE	16.05	0	0	0	16.5.1	C
AT01-008	C1909	COMMERCIAL BLDG. & HOUSE	12.02.08	2	0	0	12.1.1	E
AT01-009	C1940	EMIL HORNAS HOUSE	16.05	1	0	0	16.5.1	E
AT01-010	C1875	OLD CODY RANCH HOUSE	16.05	1	0	0	16.5.1, 11.4.4:1	P
AT01-011	C1926	HOUSE	16.05	2	0	0	16.5.1	C
AT01-012	C1912	HOUSE	16.05	1	0	0	16.5.1	C
AT01-013	C1911	HOUSE	16.05	1	0	0	16.5.1	C
AT01-014	C1910	HUSE	16.05	2	0	0	16.5.1	C
AT01-015	C1910	HOUSE	16.05	2	0	0	16.5.1	C
AT01-016	C1911	HOUSE	16.05	2	0	0	16.5.1	C
AT01-017	C1927	FORMER 7TH DAY ADV. CHURCH	02.99	1	0	0	02.1.4	C
AT01-018	1943	ARTHUR COMMUNITY BAPTIST CHURCH	02.10.01	1	0	0	02.1.4	C
AT01-019	C1909	ABAN HOUSE	16.05	3	0	0	16.5.1	C
AT01-020	C1913	ABAN COMMERCIAL BUILDING	12.02.08	1	0	0	12.1.1	C
AT01-021	C1910	OLD COWBOY REST TOME	07.05	1	0	0	21.2	C
AT01-022	C1914	COMMERCIAL BUILDING	12.02.08	1	0	0	12.1.1	C

GLOSSARY

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This Glossary lists architectural styles common in Nebraska during the mid-to-late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Style names are followed by dates suggesting the general time span, and brief descriptions identifying characteristic features. These summaries were defined by the NESHPO and included in their publication "Historic Places: The National Register for Nebraska" (NEBRASKAland, Jan.-Feb., 1989).

**Italianate 1870-1890**

A popular style for houses, these square, rectangular, or L-shaped two-story buildings have low-pitched hip roofs, with wide eaves usually supported by heavy brackets, tall narrow windows, and front porches. In some cases, the roof may be topped with a cupola.

**Queen Anne 1880-1900**

A style which enjoyed widespread popularity in the state, these two-story houses have asymmetrical facades and steeply pitched rooflines of irregular shape. Characteristics include a variety of surface textures on walls, prominent towers, tall chimneys, and porches with gingerbread trim.

**County Capitol 1880-1910**

This was a popular form for courthouses in the state and was inspired by the U.S. Capitol in Washington D.C. Usually situated on a courthouse square, these square-shaped monumental buildings exhibit corner pavilions, a prominent central domed tower, and Neo-Classical or Romanesque styling.

**Romanesque Revival 1880-1920**

These buildings are of masonry construction and usually show some rough-faced stonework. The Roman or round-topped arch is a key feature. Facades are asymmetrical and most examples have towers, brick corbelling and horizontal stone banding.

**Late Gothic Revival 1880-1930**

A later version of the Gothic style, these buildings are generally larger and use heavy masonry construction. In churches, masonry is sometimes used throughout the structure. The pointed-arch window opening remains a key feature, however designs are more subdued than those of the earlier period.

GLOSSARY

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**Eclectic 1890-1910**

An eclectic building displays a combination of architectural elements from various styles. It usually resulted when a house designed in one architectural style was remodeled.

**Shingle 1890-1920**

Characteristics include a two-story asymmetrical house with hip, gable, or gambrel roof; walls covered wholly or in part with wood shingles; little or no ornamentation; and extensive porches.

**Neo-Classical Revival 1900-1920**

Front facades are usually dominated by a full-height porch with the roof supported by classical columns. Symmetrically arranged buildings show monumental proportions, balanced windows, and a central entry.

**Renaissance Revival 1900-1920**

The style is characterized by formalism in plans, raised basements, low hipped roofs covered with clay tiles, symmetrical facades with wide overhanging eaves, arched entries and second story porches. Window treatments vary from story to story and are flat or round arched.

**Georgian or Colonial Revival 1900-1930**

A style characterized by a symmetrical facade enriched with classical detail, gable or hip roof, and eaves detailed as classical cornices. The standard window is rectangular with a double-hung sash. The Palladian window is often used as a focal point.

**Spanish Colonial Revival 1900-1920**

These buildings, which have a southwestern flavor, show masonry construction usually covered with plaster or stucco, red-tiled hipped roofs, and arcaded porches. Some facades are enriched with curvilinear and decorated roof lines.

**Prairie 1900-1930**

This movement, popularized by Frank Lloyd Wright, emphasized the integration of a building and its site. Elements of the style include a low-pitched roof line with wide overhanging eaves, two stories high with one-story porch, and an overall horizontal emphasis in the design.

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**Period 1920-1930**

Influenced by the styles of medieval English and French country cottages, these houses are usually of two stories and display irregular massing, steeply pitched roofs with slate or clay tile covering, massive chimneys, half-timbering, casement windows, and attached garages.

**Modernistic 1930-1940**

Art Deco, the earlier Modernistic phase, was used primarily for public and commercial buildings and is characterized by angular composition, with towers and vertical projections and smooth wall surfaces with stylized and geometric motifs, including zigzags and chevrons. Art Moderne, the later version, shows smooth wall finishes without surface ornamentation, asymmetrical facades with a horizontal emphasis, flat roofs, rounded corners, and bands of windows or curved window glass creating a streamlined effect.

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